

Wednesday, March 4, 1999

Arabs, Europeans ask Arabs to delay statehood declaration

King receives condolences from Argentinian president

AMMAN (PANA) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday received the daughter of Argentinian President Carlos Menem, Zulema Maria Even Menem, who offered condolences to the King and HRH Princess Rania on the passing away of King Hussein. King Abdullah and Princess Rania expressed appreciation for the gesture of Menem and his daughter and sent greetings and wishes of progress and prosperity to the Argentinian people. Menem visited King Hussein's grave, where she placed a wreath of flowers. Also attending the meeting were Argentinian Ambassador to Jordan Juan Antonio Pardo and Argentinian Ambassador to the U.N. Fernando Petrella. Also yesterday, King Abdullah received a number of Lebanese sports club presidents, who offered their condolences.

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Israel lifts closure on Palestinian areas

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel announced it would lift a four-day closure on the Palestinian territories Wednesday that was imposed amid warnings of attacks by Islamists during the Jewish holiday of Purim. An Israeli army statement said the closure would end Wednesday at midnight. Israeli Jews celebrated the festival of Purim this week, a holiday marked by violence since 1994 when a Jewish settler gunned down 29 Palestinian worshippers before being bludgeoned to death by survivors.

Britain outlaws two Protestant groups

BELFAST (AP) — The British government is outlawing two anti-Catholic terror groups that sprang up in defiance of the Belfast peace accord. Wednesday's announcement by Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam followed a string of crude bomb and grenade attacks on Catholics claimed by the two shadowy groups, the Orange Volunteers and Red Hand Defenders. Mowlam said the decision to make both groups illegal as of midnight (0000GMT) means it will become a criminal offence to belong to either group, or to solicit funds or material support for their activities. In the same announcement, Mowlam also opened the door for the Irish National Liberation Army or INLA, a small anti-British gang that called a cease-fire last August, to benefit from the peace deal.

Chechenya bank official kidnapped

GROZNY (AFP) — Gunmen kidnapped the vice-president of the National Bank of Chechnya in Grozny on Wednesday. Deputy Premier Turq Ali Agteriyev said. Armed men seized Adlan Barzunayev from his car as he was going to work, firing several shots in the process and wounding the bank official's driver. Agteriyev said. Hostage-taking became widespread in Chechnya after the 1994-96 war of secession from Russia left the republic devastated, lawless and awash with arms. A total of 189 people were kidnapped during 1998, 118 of whom were freed. Eight hostages were killed, including three Britons and a New Zealander.

Right-wing paper editor beaten in Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — The chief editor of the anti-Semitic newspaper "Zavtra," Alexander Prokhanov, was beaten up Monday evening near his home by two unknown assailants, media reports said Wednesday. It was the second time in about a year that Prokhanov has been assaulted. Police are investigating the latest incident, Interfax reported.

Canadian police raid official's home in gambling probe

VANCOUVER (AP) — Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers raided the home of British Columbia's premier in an investigation related to gambling at a hotel near Vancouver. Members of the RCMP Commercial Crime Division, equipped with a search warrant, raided Glen Clark's east Vancouver home Tuesday evening. It was not immediately disclosed whether anything was seized at the premier's home but he was cooperating with police, said Geoff Meggs, a spokesman for Clark.

Khatib says Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations 'back on track'

Jordanian embassy in Kuwait officially reopens

By Caroline Faraj

KUWAIT CITY — Jordan reopened its embassy here yesterday, officially marking the resumption of normal bilateral ties between the two countries after an eight-year strain stemming from the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib, who arrived in Kuwait on Tuesday and met with several senior officials, Wednesday hoisted the Jordanian flag at the embassy's temporary premises at Al Safir Hotel, a senior official told the Jordan Times.

"I can say that Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations are back on track, and prospects for developing these ties in all aspects are wide open," Khatib told the Jordanian press before leaving Kuwait at the end of his two-day trip, which he described as "very positive."

Khatib, who was invited by his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Tuesday met with Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Sa'd Al Abdullah Al Sabah.

Responding Tuesday to an invitation from Khatib, the Kuwaiti foreign minister said that he hoped to visit Jordan "very soon."

Mohammad Manfie was appointed Jordan's new chargé d'affaires in Kuwait. Both countries are expected to exchange ambassadors shortly.

Commenting on reticence to re-establish warm ties with Jordan, Al Ayar said: "I think that there are still bitter voices from some members of parliament on both sides, but there is now better understanding of Jordan's position."

Khatib agreed, saying "I think Jordan's position is well appreciated and understood in Kuwait. I also think the vast



Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib attends a ceremony Wednesday in Kuwait City for the reopening of Jordan's embassy (AFP photo)

foreign affairs committee. According to Ayar, Saadoun had previous commitments to be in Qatar

"We had a very frank discussion about ways to develop relations between Jordan and Kuwait and the role of parliamentarians in improving ties," Khatib said.

A committee representing the families of Kuwaiti prisoners of war visited Khatib yesterday and asked him to convey an urgent message to all Jordanians to continue their efforts to seek the release of all Kuwaitis held in Iraq.

In response Khatib said, "I have expressed our readiness to offer support to the families of the PoWs at different forums."

Khatib was seen off at the airport by Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah and several senior Kuwaiti officials.

majority of both Kuwaitis and Jordanians are in favour of developing relations between the two countries."

Following Khatib's meeting on Wednesday with leading Kuwaiti journalists and chief editors, Al Siyassah Chief Editor Ahmad Jarallah said, "Kuwaitis in general view the resumption of the relations as a welcome development and one that is beneficial to both sides."

"We believe that Jordan can continue its efforts in helping us in mediating the release of the prisoners from Iraq," he added.

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Khatib was seen off at the airport by Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah and several senior Kuwaiti officials.

"We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the efforts that Jordan has offered in order to help in focusing on our just, unfortunate and humanitarian case," the head of the committee, Abdul Aziz Mashari, said.

"We believe that Jordan can continue its efforts in helping us in mediating the release of the prisoners from Iraq," he added.

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Court seeks tougher sentence against man convicted of selling children

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has asked the Court of Appeals to pass a tougher sentence against a former honorary consul of Sri Lanka to Jordan who was convicted last year of forging official documents and baby trafficking, judicial sources said Wednesday.

Abu Khajil, 58, was also convicted in September 1998 by the Court of Appeals of abusing his post and was sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison.

The Court of Cassation returned the case to the Appeals Court, asking it to reconsider its previous sentence and to lengthen the sentence against

Abu Khajil," a judicial source, who preferred anonymity, told the Jordan Times on Wednesday.

The Court of Appeals, in its September 1998 verdict, also upheld Abu Khajil's earlier acquittal on over 80 charges brought against him by the Amman prosecutor general.

Abu Khajil, who was freed on JD20,000 bail in April 1997, was arrested shortly after airport police stopped a Dutch couple who were leaving the country on March 13, 1996 with a child they had adopted after paying a sum of \$8,000. The authorities found forged documents with the couple.

He was charged with 26 counts of forging documents and using forged documents.

36 counts of infant trafficking, possession of unlicensed firearms, importation of illegal wireless radio, abuse of office and forgery of a government seal.

Almost a year later, the Court of First Instance convicted Abu Khajil of selling a baby, attempting to sell another and of forgery of official documents and sentenced him to three years in prison with hard labour.

His attorneys appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeals, which in July 1997 acquitted Abu Khajil of charges of selling one baby and attempting to sell another.

At that time, the court ruled that "no proof existed that the former consul bought or sold any child; rather, what hap-

pened was an adoption authorised by Jordanian and Dutch laws."

The Court of Appeals then also commuted the forgery charges to a misdemeanour, ruling that Abu Khajil did not forge official documents.

The prosecution appealed the ruling to the Court of Cassation which in December 1997 overturned the Court of Appeals ruling on the grounds that a 1929 law banning slavery prohibited the sale of babies.

The court ruled that the law also included provisions that banned any practice that could undermine human freedom whether through treatment of humans as slaves, their deportation or their holding as

hostages.

Netanyahu, Labour reject Sharon call to delay polls, quit Lebanon

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Lebanon conflict sowed divisions in Israel's right-wing government Wednesday after Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon issued a surprise call to delay May elections and form an emergency unity government to pull the Israeli army from south Lebanon.

The proposal was quickly rejected by both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Labour opposition, which described the initiative as an "election gimmick" raised in desperation to match its plan for ending Israel's 21-year military presence in Lebanon.

"The election should not be postponed," Netanyahu, head of the right-wing Likud Party, said on Israeli

army radio. "We want to leave Lebanon, but we have to make sure that Lebanon doesn't come to us," he said, echoing his argument that a unilateral withdrawal from Israeli-occupied south Lebanon would leave northern Israel vulnerable to attack by Islamist and Palestinian guerrillas.

Defence Minister Moshe Arens also dismissed Sharon's proposal, saying it was "not technically feasible."

Arens said instead that Israel should reconsider its tactics in Lebanon and notably consider abandoning a three-year-old truce agreement barring attacks on civilian targets.

He said the accords "tie the army's hands and... provide a large degree of immunity to Hezbollah," the main movement fighting Israel's occupation.

In a series of interviews, Sharon said the country could not allow the mounting losses in Israel's occupied zone in south Lebanon or the deadlock in the peace process with the Palestinians to continue for months until a new government can be formed following the elections.

"We need to set up an emergency government immediately, headed by Likud and Labour, to reach a decision on unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon and on implementing [peace] agreements with the Pales-

tinians," he said.

Sharon, a hawk who led Israel into its 1982 invasion of Lebanon, has called in the past for a phased withdrawal from the buffer zone, anxious to avoid being dragged into peace negotiations with Syria which could lead to a pullout from the Golan Heights.

Faced with the rejection of both Netanyahu and Labour, Sharon backed down.

"I am sorry that my proposal was rejected. All I wanted to do was to exclude Lebanon from the election campaign," he said.

The opposition Labour Party and centre movement of former Netanyahu Defence Minister Yitzhak

Mordechai described Sharon's bid as an election ploy to save Netanyahu's flagging campaign.

"This is proof that Netanyahu can't govern," said Nehama Ronen, a centrist candidate for parliament.

The headquarters of Labour chief Ehud Barak, Netanyahu's main rival for the premiership, said Sharon issued his plan simply to counter Barak's announcement Tuesday that if elected he would pull Israeli troops out of Lebanon by June 2000.

"We have a serious proposal for withdrawal from Lebanon which is based on negotiations with Syria — this is a desperately weak response to our plan," said Shlomo Ben-Ami, a senior Labour official.

The Lebanon issue took centre stage in the election campaign after seven Israelis — including the top Israeli general in south Lebanon, were killed by Islamist guerrillas in less than a week.

In his campaign pledge, Barak said he would achieve a withdrawal by reviving peace negotiations with Syria — the main power in Lebanon — and working for deployment of an international peacekeeping force along the Israeli-Lebanon border.

With opinion polls showing most Israelis feel Netanyahu has not done enough to end the Lebanon crisis during his three years in office, the prime minister quickly said he too would bring the troops home in a year.

(Continued on page 2)

Truce panel finds guerrillas guilty of violating accords

NAQOURA (AFP) — The international committee monitoring a ceasefire in southern Lebanon on Wednesday found Lebanese guerrillas guilty of violating a 1996 ceasefire agreement not to put civilians at risk.

The monitoring group declared its ruling after a hastily arranged overnight meeting in an attempt to defuse rising tension following a series of deadly attacks on Israeli soldiers.

Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss said he was satisfied with the results of the meeting.

"Lebanon, which has never attacked civilians, reiterates its commitment to respecting the April [1996]

agreement and places the responsibility on Israel for its violation on several occasions," he said.

The committee said in a statement that Lebanese guerrillas fired last week more than 70 mortar rounds over a period of 72 hours from within the village of Majdel Silim in southern Lebanon, "in violation" of the agreement.

"The firing occurred following the detection and pursuit by Israeli forces of a Lebanese armed group on a military mission," said the group, made up of delegates from France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the U.S.

The committee also said two Katyusha rockets were

fired by an armed group in Lebanon into northern Israel on Feb. 27, with one rocket damaging a house and car and the other slamming on a road near a village.

The 1996 truce agreement commits the two sides not to target civilians on either side of the border, and not to launch attacks from civilian areas.

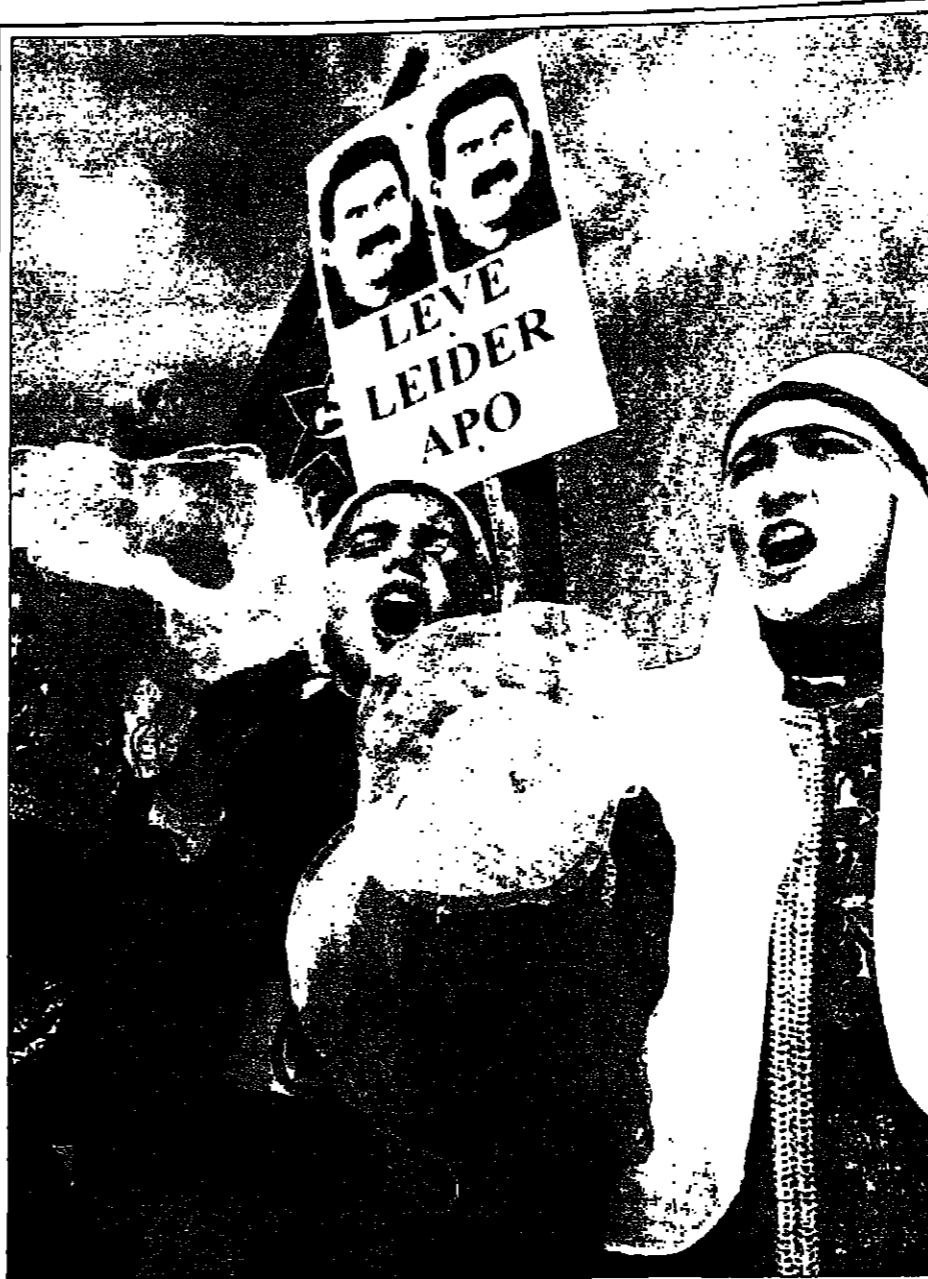
"In the context of current tensions, the monitoring group welcomed commitment of the parties to uphold the April understanding and, in this regard, noted the important role the group can play in protecting civilians by building mutual restraint, diffusing tensions and preventing

escalation," the statement said.

The group called on the two sides to abide by terms of the truce agreement because of "their shared interest in avoiding provocative actions and containing the impact of violence on civilians."

The meeting was brought forward following the deadly clashes in south Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a "new policy" of harsher reprisals after a spate of recent troop losses, including a top general and an elite paratroops commander at the hands of Islamist guerrillas in less than a week.



Kurdish youth dressed in traditional clothes dance during a sit-in held in front of the United Nations headquarters in Beirut on Wednesday. About 200 Lebanese Kurds protested outside the U.N. on Wednesday, demanding freedom for jailed guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan (Reuters photo)

Gulf Arab states to send 'clear message' to Iran

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) press on Wednesday said the Gulf Arab foreign ministers' emergency meeting this week in Abu Dhabi would send a "clear message" to Iran.

"The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) ministerial meeting, which will discuss Iran's transgressions and military manoeuvres in the emirates' territorial waters, will send a clear message" to Tehran, the Al Ittihad daily said.

"This meeting is of particu-

lar importance in that it is a rapid reaction to the hostile Iranian moves towards the emirates' right to exercise sovereignty over the emirate islands occupied by Iran," the newspaper said.

"This meeting constitutes a turning point in the Gulf Arab attitude to the question of the islands," Al Ittihad said.

A Bayan newspaper said the meeting would send "a unified message, which could lead the Iranian leadership to revise its unilateral moves on the Abu Musa island, to show good intentions and accept

international arbitration to resolve the conflict."

The Al Khaleej daily accused Iran of "procrastinating,

despite the effort

deployed for a peaceful solution

to the conflict, of refusing

international arbitration and practising a policy of fait accompli."

"It is normal that the UAE

should ask the GCC foreign

ministers to discuss the very

serious developments" in the

conflict, the newspaper said.

The islands of Abu Musa

and the Lesser and Greater

Turks are claimed by both

Book says Israel blackmailed Clinton about Lewinsky affair

NEW YORK (AFP) — A new book alleges Israel's intelligence service secretly taped U.S. President Bill Clinton's racy phone talks with Monica Lewinsky and used them to blackmail him, the New York Post reported Wednesday.

Israel's renowned Mossad spy agency used the tapes of conversations between the president and the former White House intern to compel Clinton to call off FBI hunt for an Israeli spy working at the White House, according to the Post's description of the book.

Written by respected British author Gordon Thomas, "Gideon's Spies — The Secret History of the Mossad" was due out at bookstores next week.

The White House emphatically denied Gordon's account on Wednesday.

She said Clinton told her that if she were ever asked about the phone sex, she was to pretend

— to tell you the truth, book sellers ought to consider selling it in the fiction section," said White House spokesman Barry Toiv.

Another White House spokesman, David Leavy, maintained that presidential communications were secure.

"I am not aware of any phone tapping of the president's lines. We take all precautions to make sure that his communications are secure. The story is nonsense in my view," he said.

But the Post recalled that in the report by Independent Council Kenneth Starr to Congress, which formed the basis for Clinton's impeachment trial, Lewinsky said the president suspected their telephone calls were bugged by a foreign government.

Pollard, a former U.S. navy intelligence analyst, has served 13 years of a life sentence for spying for Israel.

BRIEFS

Palestinians want U.S. help in row with Israel

RAMALLAH (AFP) — The Palestinians have asked the United States to intervene in a dispute with Israel over the establishment of a sewage treatment plant in the West Bank, officials said Wednesday. Israeli authorities have threatened to block construction of the German-financed plant in the village of Salfit unless the Palestinians agree to make it part of a joint facility which could also serve the adjacent Jewish settlement of Ariel. Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian minister of planning and international cooperation, rejected the Israeli demand, saying the plant is being paid for by donations to the Palestinian National Authority.

'No security for Israel unless it withdraws'

DAMASCUS (R) — Syrian state-run newspapers said on Wednesday that Israel would not enjoy security unless it withdrew its troops from the Golan Heights and south Lebanon. The Syria Times praised the Lebanese guerrillas who on Sunday killed an Israeli general, the highest-ranking Israeli officer to be killed in south Lebanon since 1982. Real security and peace would be realised only through an unconditional Israeli pullback from the Golan, south Lebanon and other occupied Arab territories, it added.

'Blitz on Lebanon will lead to Netanyahu downfall'

BEIRUT (AFP) — A large-scale Israeli attack on Lebanon could lead to the downfall of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Syrian Foreign Minister Faruk Al Sharra has told a Lebanese newspaper. "Such an attack will provoke retaliation by the resistance," he said in an interview published in the pro-Syrian leftist Al Safir newspaper on Wednesday. "Aggression against Lebanon could bring down Netanyahu as it brought down [former Prime Minister Shimon] Peres," who lost the 1996 elections after the ill-fated Grapes of Wrath offensive, he added.

U.S. urging Israel to facilitate trade — official

(Continued from page 1)

"I've been told... that there is a real willingness on the part of the Palestinians to accept more Jordanian goods, so I think the key is Israel," he said. "We are hopeful that they will move promptly. This is critical to Jordan's economic health."

Yesterday, before speaking with reporters, Eisenstat met with His Majesty King Abdullah.

During the meeting, he reaffirmed Washington's determination to support Jordan by providing supplemental economic aid to the country in addition to its regular allocations to Jordan as part of the annual foreign aid, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Eisenstat underlined the

importance of Jordan's role in the region and said the late King Hussein played a key role in achieving peace and stability in the Middle East.

Speaking in the presence of Planning Minister Nabil Ammari and the U.S. chargé d'affaires, Eisenstat said the U.S. will encourage donor nations to provide aid to Jordan and will urge Israel to open the door for Jordanian exports to reach the Palestinian markets during his upcoming visit to Israel.

Earlier in the day, Eisenstat met with Prime Minister Ammar, Minister of State for Development Affairs Taher Kana'an, Finance Minister Michel Marti and Central Bank of Jordan Governor Zeid Fariz for a

detailed review of economic cooperation.

Eisenstat said the United States congratulated Jordan on signing a renewed agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (see separate story).

"The agreement is important because the new IMF programme will provide direct financial support and is a road map for further economic reform," Eisenstat said. "[The agreement] is important for another reason, that is it gives Jordan an economic framework with which it can go to the Paris Club of creditor nations to seek a rescheduling of its debt obligations.

The United States will support the substantial rescheduling of Jordan's obligations with the Paris Club."

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follow-up meeting to discuss the progress of the IMF programme.

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BRIEFS

Two-day weekend continues to stir controversy**Union threatens to sue Central Bank...**

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — A tug-of-war between the Jordan Trade Union of Insurance and Auditor Employees (JTUIAE) and the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) has sharpened with the former considering plans to take CBJ Governor Ziyad Fariz to court over alleged abuses and violation of employees' rights.

The move comes following the CBJ's recent decision to introduce a two-day weekend (Friday and Saturday), and extended daily banking hours to compensate for the lost time.

The decision, which took effect on March 1, requires the country's 22 commercial banks to operate from Sunday to Thursday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with a minimum 30-minute lunch break, bringing the total number of working hours to a maximum of 42.5 instead of 36 hours.

Despite bankers' affirmations that the new arrangement will boost economic and business performance, JTUIAE officials insist

that only bank owners will benefit from the changes.

The decision was received with storms of protests since most bank employees, who number some 15,000, find it difficult to make major adjustments to their daily routine.

The union said that it decided to take action after it sent scores of memoranda over the last two weeks lobbying the CBJ, bank administrations and Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh to alter working hours to start at 8:00 and end at 3:30, but to no avail.

Fakhri Zayadin, JTUIAE deputy said bank administration are only applying laws that best serve their interests, disregarding other articles in the labour law which serve those of employees.

He was referring to Article 56 of the 1996 Labour Law which sets a maximum of eight working hours per day and a maximum of 48 hours per week spread over six days, at most.

Most bank employees

have worked for 36 hours weekly since the early 1960s. This, Zayadin added, has become an acquired right.

"Therefore, employees should be compensated for having to work extra hours," he said.

"Now that banks have lent their approval to the CBJ, they have to abide by the other laws which serve employees," he told the Jordan Times in an interview.

"Working mothers are entitled to have nurseries for their children, for example," Zayadin said referring to article 72 which says in institutions where there are more than 20 mothers, employers must secure nurseries for children below the age of four.

"The JTUIAE is awaiting to see if bank administrations abide by the unions' demands which are in line with the 1996 labour law. When the picture becomes clearer the union will contest with the banks' administrations," he said.

Most bank employees

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday stood divided over the controversial government proposal to introduce a two-day weekend which would add Thursday to the existing Friday holiday.

The House floor heard deputies speak for and against the two-day weekend and its benefits and disadvantages.

A major point of contention is that the proposal, which has come under harsh criticism from business and commercial sectors, also stipulates increasing public sector working hours by one hour each day to compensate hours lost to the Thursday holiday.

The banking and stock market sectors began observing a two-day weekend on March 1, taking Friday and Saturday off.

"We are in the midst of serious economic problems. Therefore, there is no need for a two-day

weekend which, if approved, will have a negative impact on productivity and will increase production costs," said deputy Abdul Razzaq Tabeishat, who opposed the proposal.

"It put a social and economic burden which our society is unable to shoulder. Therefore, I believe that it is better if we postpone the discussion on this proposal," he told his colleagues.

Deputy Mahmoud Kharabsheh supported Tabeishat's position.

"This proposal is not in the benefit of the country which already witnesses low productivity of the Jordanian employees, especially during the final hours of the work day," he said.

"If we increase the working hours, productivity will decrease again and again," Kharabsheh added.

According to Deputy Mohammad Thweib, "the new proposal will mean more laziness among employees and more relaxation and a decline in their ability to work."

Deputy Mohammad Oran spoke in favour of the two-day weekend and said its application will reduce traffic accidents by 15 per cent and will ease traffic jams in different parts of the capital.

Deputy Abdullah Akaleh also expressed support for the proposal, but urged the government not to substitute the second day with additional working hours.

Some deputies charged that an increase in working hours would be in violation of Article 58 of the Labour Law, which stipulates that working hours for private sector workers should not exceed eight hours a day.

The banking sector has ordered its employees to work from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily to compensate for the lost hours in taking an additional day off.

Tarawneh told the 80-member Parliament that the government has agreed in principle to approve Thursday and Friday as the weekend, but noted that no final decision has been taken yet.

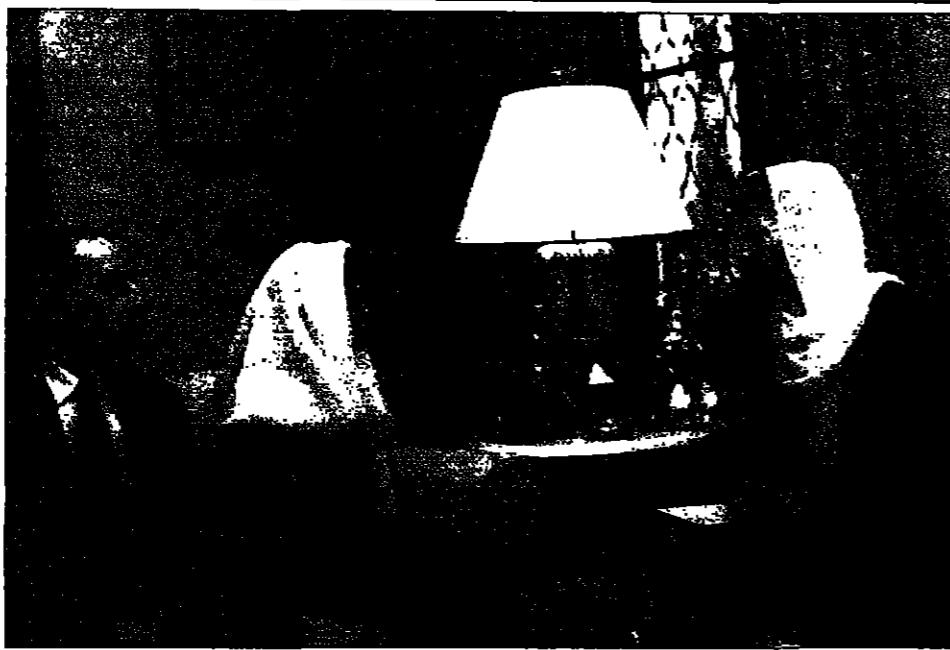
additional source of income by benefiting from the weekend for additional work, especially in the agriculture sector.

He added that he received a memorandum from leaders of the chambers of commerce and industry and the Jordanian Businessmen's Association urging him to postpone such a decision.

"We are passing through difficult economic circumstances with economic growth in the past two years reaching a mere one per cent. We do not need an experiment that might exacerbate the economic and social problems," the memorandum said.

The final decision of whether to implement the Thursday-Friday weekend holiday lies with Prime Minister Fayed Tarawneh.

During Wednesdays session at least 23 lawmakers supported the idea, 12 objected and another 11 urged the government to postpone a decision on the issue.

...while Parliament stands a house divided

QUEEN NOOR MEETS MENEM: Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday received the daughter of the President of Argentina, Zulema Maria Even Menem at Bab Al Salam. Menem presented the Queen with a letter from Carlos Menem, who sent his daughter to "convey his feelings of sorrow for the loss of His Majesty King Hussein."

The Queen said under His Majesty King Abdullah's leadership, Jordan will forge even stronger ties with Argentina.

Ambassador of Argentina Juan Antonio Pardo (based in Syria) and Ambassador of Argentina to the United Nations Fernando Petrella also attended.

NAF undergoes administrative overhaul

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — A series of corrective and remedial action are being implemented within the National Aid Fund (NAF) as part of a three-year executive action plan.

The overhaul is based on a review of the activities and administrative structure of the NAF by a taskforce commissioned by the Ministry of Planning.

"For the past year now the fund has been undergoing major restructuring and expansion of its administrative structure and programmes of assistance to the poor through the RENAF programme," said Fayez Suyyagh Director of the RENAF project.

He told the Jordan Times that among the many changes introduced is the inclusion of the employable poor and "occasionally employed poor whose income is still not sufficient to bring them up to the absolute poverty line" on the list of fund recipients.

The able-bodied unemployed and the working poor, who form the majority of the poor in Jordan, were previously excluded from any form of assistance.

Eligibility criteria for receiving cash transfers apply to orphans' families, widows, families of partially disabled or physically disabled families of prisoners, and the elderly.

Studies indicate that a poor family has on average nine children or more.

Previously, the NAF defined a family as a family consisting of six children. Any additional ones were excluded from assistance in the past.

RENAF modified eligibility criteria for cash assistance to cater to families having up to ten children and to include those falling below the poverty line, not just those with special circumstances.

Suyyagh said, "The criteria will entail the family's income regardless of physical or special circumstances." He added, "RENAF aspires to improve public cash assistance targeted at the poor through strengthening and expanding NAF's operations and programmes, and upgrading the NAF's administrative structure and processes."

The aim is to expand NAF's current cash assistance programmes to reach a larger percentage of the poor," Suyyagh said. Previously, NAF was only able to assist 54 per cent of the total number of families below the abject poverty line.

According to the Ministry of Social Development the abject poverty line is estimated at an income of JD61 a month for an average family of 6.8, and the absolute poverty line stands at an income JD119 a month for families that pay rent, and JD97 a month for families that do not pay rent.

Suyyagh explained that the abject poverty line set is based on the cost of basic food and non-food requirements that include shelter, education, health, clothing, and transportation.

Jordanians living under the abject poverty line stand at six to eight per cent of the population. The percentage of families below the absolute poverty line are approximately 20 per cent of the population.

The NAF falls under the Social Productivity Programme; the national organisation responsible for addressing poverty and unemployment in the country.

Since its inception in 1986, NAF has been providing cash transfers, the largest chunk of its work, to the unemployable poor and to households with incomes less than JD60 per month. New modifications for a family of up to 10 children is JD83 monthly.

NAF assistance also includes disaster alleviation and physical rehabilitation. It gives loans for income generation, and provides vocational training. The fund's annual budget has been increased to JD22 mil-

lion this year with cash transfers accounting to JD17 million of this amount.

A pilot Wage Subsidy Scheme has also been introduced where 50 able and productive poor have been employed, for a six-month period in the private sector. Among those employed were 25 females.

NAF pays part of the salary of these employees and the privately-owned company the rest.

It is estimated that around 3,000 poor people will be employed through this scheme.

"This venture has proven very successful and has encouraged the private sector in providing employment opportunities for these people," Suyyagh said.

The NAF package enables beneficiaries to make use of the food coupon system, the health card programme, and wheat subsidy compensation.

Suyyagh said that many of the eligible poor do not opt for NAF assistance, held back by social barriers and values. Abu Ahmad, father of ten children, lives at Safa Al Nuzha in eastern Amman, where 10,000 residents live on one square kilometre of land under harsh economic circumstances.

He is poor and unemployed and his three teenage sons cannot find work.

Abu Ahmad does not make use of NAF assistance as he feels to ask for help would be more "like begging." He prefers to ask relatives for help.

"Many of the poor don't know of us or just don't approach us because of social taboos," said Suyyagh. "They believe that by asking for NAF cash assistance they are begging. In reality NAF assistance is a civil right of the poor."

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation has acquitted the son of a deputy who in October of 1997 was arrested in a high profile case on charges of smuggling heroin to the Kingdom, the defendant's attorneys and judicial sources confirmed Wednesday.

Samer Haddadin, 31, son of Third District opposition Deputy Khalil Haddadin, along with two other men were sentenced to seven-and-a-half years each by the State Security Court on April 26, 1998, after being convicted of complicity in smuggling drugs into the Kingdom.

Last week, the Court of Cassation acquitted all three men of the charges because "of procedural errors" in the investigation, judicial sources told the Jordan Times.

The Cassation Court also acquitted Ahmad Abdul Hai, 22, and Majdi Aqel, 32. All three defendants spent

against the defendants, and the court cannot convict anyone when there are doubts as to the procedures or the evidence," the source, who preferred not to be named, said.

Haddadin's Defence Attorneys Mohammad Hantoush and Mohammad Dubbati told the Jordan Times that their clients "were released from custody last week."

"We had faith in the justice system, and I was pleased that justice was served in the end," Dubbati told the Jordan Times Wednesday evening.

Samer Haddadin, an engineer, was arrested by Anti-Narcotics Department agents on Oct. 26, 1997, for allegedly smuggling five kilogrammes of heroin into the country.

The Cassation Court also acquitted Ahmad Abdul Hai, 22, and Majdi Aqel, 32. All three defendants spent

almost 17 months in prison.

A fourth defendant, Farid Quasar, 52, a Lebanese, was acquitted by the State Security Court in April 1998.

According to prosecution's charge sheet, the four defendants, who were friends, decided in August 1998 to smuggle the heroin and to smuggle the drug from Lebanon to sell in Jordan.

News of their arrest was made public by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, just one week before voters headed to the polls to elect the 13th Parliament.

The official agency quoted officials as saying that Samer Haddadin and three others were arrested following the seizure of a truck carrying horses from Lebanon to a farm in the Jordan Valley.

Samer's father, Khalil Haddadin, who was then running for the Amman's

Third District Christian seat, described the arrest as a "time trap."

He said at the time that he was sure of his son's innocence "as much as I am sure of the justice of our law."

Haddadin continued with the campaign "because this is the destiny of fighters." He won the Christian seat in Amman's Third District, collecting over 3,000 votes.

Opposition parties, represented by the Higher Committee for Coordination Among the Opposition Parties, criticised the publication and circulation of the name of Haddadin's son by Petra shortly after the arrest in an official statement saying that "the official media have initiated a campaign to incriminate Haddadin's son before the court makes a decision."

An ounce of poverty prevention beats a pound of cure

By Susan Resheq

[these factors] have increased migration from the countryside to cities, and have created social and family problems," Mamsar added.

The number of families that benefited from the ministry's monthly financial aid last year was 40,000; it is expected to reach 50,000 families by the end of 1999.

Mamsar said the ministry has programmes to solve children's problems, those with special needs, broken families, and the needy or sick people. It also has programmes designed to prevent the exploitation of women.

"Spreading family planning awareness is a priority of the ministry, especially among poor families, whose number has increased," Mamsar said, adding that the poor form 22 per cent of Jordanian society.

The ministry has launched programmes to rehabilitate and train the handicapped, on which the ministry spent JD1 million in equipment purchases, said the minister.

Mamsar said that there are three main sectors — the government, the voluntary and the private — dealing with social work.

"The ministry has several plans meant to reduce poverty and unemployment rates in the Kingdom," he added.

WHAT'S GOING ON**FILMS**

* German children's film "Die Sendung mit der Maus" — Ostergeschichten at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Sunday March 6 at 5:00 p.m.

* "The Fifth Element" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman on Sunday March 7 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

LECTURES

* Lecture by Mahmoud Rimawi about his experience in writing (in Arabic) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Sunday March 7 at 6:00 p.m.

* "The Antiquities of Ghor Aj Saifi" at the Friends of Archaeology Centre on Monday March 8 at 6:30 p.m. (Telefax: 5930682).

* "The Arab Intellectual and the Inevitability of Globalisation" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman on Monday March 8 at 6:30 p.m.

The editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish to offer their condolences on the passing of Nawal Masarweh Aunt of our colleague and friend Reem Jasser May her soul rest in peace



File photo dated Dec. 9, 1998, shows 28-year-old Cambodian Sam Vishna looking at a mixture of brown and white skulls that make up a map of Cambodia at Tuol Sleng (S-21 prison) Museum, the former high school turned prison by the Khmer Rouge during the Pol Pot regime where more than seventeen thousand men, women and children were held before taken to the killing fields to be executed. A United Nations panel has recommended the establishment of a new international tribunal to try senior Khmer Rouge leaders for their role in the Cambodian genocide. Sam Vishna's father, older brother and sister were all killed at the killing fields during 1976 (AFP photo)

Cambodian PM warns on Khmer Rouge trial

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen Wednesday appeared to rule out an international tribunal for Khmer Rouge leaders held responsible for their 1970s "killing fields" reign of terror.

Hun Sen said efforts to bring leaders of the Khmer Rouge to trial could create panic among members of the group who have already surrendered and shattered Cambodia's recently found peace.

Hun Sen said in a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that Cambodia was considering setting up a South African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate almost 30 years of conflict since 1970.

"We have never rejected the accountability of the Khmer Rouge leaders for the crimes of genocide in Cambodia," Hun Sen said in the letter, released by the government in Phnom Penh.

"We just want... to caution that any decision to bring the Khmer Rouge leaders to justice must also take into full

account Cambodia's need for peace, national reconciliation and economic development," he said.

Earlier Wednesday Foreign Minister Hor Namhong said he would travel to New York next week for talks with Annan on a U.N. proposal for an international tribunal for Khmer Rouge leaders.

The U.N. report has not been released but the New York Times said it proposed an international tribunal to try a dozen former Khmer Rouge leaders and a separate Cambodian truth commission to consider all other cases.

The report was drawn up by team of legal experts appointed after a 1997 request from the government for help in setting up a tribunal to investigate the 1975-79 period of Khmer Rouge rule when an estimated 1.7 million people were killed.

But Hun Sen appeared to rule out an international tribunal any time soon, repeating warnings that a quick trial could lead to renewed conflict.

"If improperly and heed-

lessly conducted, the trials of Khmer Rouge leaders would panic other Khmer Rouge officers and in rank and file, who have already surrendered, into turning back to the jungle and renewing guerrilla war," he said.

Former Khmer Rouge fighters, who kept their weapons when they surrendered, have warned of trouble if attempts are made to arrest their leaders. The government has let them live freely in former strongholds.

Hun Sen also repeated his view that an investigation of the Khmer Rouge should cover the whole period of conflict from 1970 to 1998, not just the 1975-79 period of Khmer Rouge rule.

A broadening of the time-frame could implicate the United States, which launched a massive bombing campaign against Cambodia during the Vietnam war which analysts argue fuelled the rise of the Khmer Rouge.

China and Thailand backed the Khmer Rouge after their early 1979 ouster by Vietnamese forces.

British balloonists to cross Vietnam at night

HANOI (AFP) — A team of round-the-world British balloonists will cross over Vietnamese airspace at about 11:00 p.m. (1600 GMT) Wednesday. Vietnamese aviation officials said.

The Cable and Wireless balloon is expected to cross the Lao-Vietnamese border near the head of the Ho Chi Minh trail and will exit Vietnamese airspace at a longitude of 102 degrees east and a latitude of 16 degrees north.

The civil aviation authority of Vietnam told AFP the balloon was expected to fly at about 30,000 feet.

The flight path chosen will cross over the narrowest strip of Vietnamese territory, just south of the 17th Parallel.

which formerly divided North and South Vietnam before the war which ended in 1975.

British round-the-world balloonists Andy Elson and Colin Prescott passed north of Bangkok at 0500 GMT Wednesday and were preparing to cross into Laos.

But Lao officials contacted by telephone from here could not confirm the report.

Mission control in London said earlier that Elson and Prescott were not worried about being overtaken by rival balloon, Breitling Orbiter III, piloted by Swiss balloonist Bertrand Piccard and his British partner Brian Jones, which took off from the Alps Monday.

The British pair are busy

trying to avoid straying into Chinese airspace as they fly over southeast Asia.

Beijing, angered that an earlier failed round-world bid by British tycoon Richard Branson flew into its airspace without permission, has refused them permission to enter its territory.

Early Saturday morning, the two, who took off from southeast Spain on Feb. 17, smashed the 233 hour and 55 minute record set by Piccard in 1998.

Meanwhile, the Breitling Orbiter III balloon was flying over Morocco Wednesday in a bid to catch rapid jet streams over Mauritania, the project's managers said in Geneva.

Singer Dusty Springfield dies at 59

LONDON (R) — Dusty Springfield, the 1960s British pop star famous for her husky voice and blonde beehive hairdo, has died at the age of 59, her agent said Wednesday.

Springfield, who had fought a long battle against breast cancer, died Tuesday night at her home in Henley-on-Thames, west of London, agent Paul Fenn said. Her cancer had first been detected in 1994.

Born Mary O'Brien in London, she teamed up in the early 1960s with her brother Tom to form the Springfields, which became one of the country's top pop and folk acts.

Once described as Britain's finest white soul singer, Springfield's 1963 solo debut "I only want to be with you" is

now a pop classic.

Worldwide success came in 1966, with "You don't have to say you love me," which sold a million copies to become her only British number one hit.

In 1968, she moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where she recorded "Dusty in Memphis," regarded by some critics as one of the decade's finest albums. At the same time she released her classic single "Son of a preacher man."

After disappearing from the charts, Springfield let slip in a 1975 newspaper interview a veiled admission that she was bisexual and moved to Los Angeles.

She recorded little, preferring to spend time with tennis star Billie Jean King and cam-

paign for animal rights.

In the 1980s, she found renewed success when she teamed up with Britain's Pet Shop Boys, who persuaded her to duet with them on their hit single "What have I done to deserve this?"

The group also wrote the theme song to "Scandal," the film of one of Britain's most notorious political scandals of the 1980s, which also became a hit for Springfield.

In May last year, Springfield announced a financial deal in Los Angeles under which she would get millions of dollars in exchange for future royalties from her hits.

Just two months ago, Springfield was honoured by Britain, being granted an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire).

Expert says Y2k may affect medical devices

MANILA (R) — A millennium bug expert said Wednesday some hospital equipment, including life-support systems, may stop functioning at the stroke of 2000.

Randy Boback, of the Network Consulting Group of Canada, told delegates of the second global Y2k summit in Manila that some hospital devices had been identified to run into problems starting on Jan. 1, 2000.

The millennium bug,

called Y2k is a programming flaw in computers that may cause them to crash on Jan. 1, 2000, causing widespread confusion and chaos.

While some problems would have relatively low impact on patients' health, some could be a source of concern, he said.

"The areas where we are concerned are long-term care and where analysis and life-support on an ongoing basis are required," Boback said.

"Some items will cause a

delay in services. Others will cause a longer-term harm, and some might cause some kind of critical issue." He did not elaborate.

Boback said the majority of the equipment that would encounter Y2k problems

centred on clinical laboratory, radiology and patient care systems but these should not critically affect the patients.

"None of them tend to be critical and they can be replaced by manual methods or by old-fashioned

good doctoring," he said, adding these could be upgraded within the remaining 10 months to 2000.

Surgical procedures are also relatively safe from the Y2k bug.

"The loss of a limb will require a good surgeon, but most of these devices are mechanical in nature, they do not require high level of intelligence, and they are not time-sensitive," he said.

Boback said some devices could not be tested if they would work or not at the

turn of the millennium "because we do not know how to put the dates in."

"There's a certain degree of uncertainty in what devices will or will not work because of that," he said.

Boback said, for example, a brand of blood analyser that looks for a complete count of white blood cells had invalidated all inputs with a "00" date. He did not elaborate on its implication.

Croatia readies for WWII trial, reckoning with past

ZAGREB (R) — The World War II crimes trial in post-Communist Croatia opens in a Zagreb court Thursday amid a clamour of interest from diplomats, media and human rights officials.

All will be keeping close tabs on the trial of Dinko Sakic, a former concentration camp commander, to see how it is conducted and whether Croatia is finally coming to terms with its fascist past.

But the 76-year-old defendant is unlikely to appear at the start of his trial after falling ill Tuesday night.

Sakic was taken to Rebro hospital in Zagreb after he vomited, fainted and suffered very high blood pressure overnight, his lawyer Ivan Kern told Reuters Wednesday.

"According to the latest information, Sakic will be transferred to a prison hospital today, but as far as I

can judge I don't think he will be capable of attending the main hearing tomorrow," Kern said.

A court spokesman said the trial would start on schedule with or without Sakic, and a decision would then be taken on whether to postpone it.

Sakic commanded the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp and was a deputy at nearby Stara Gradiska camp in 1942-45, when Croatia was ruled by the Nazi-backed Ustashe regime that brutally persecuted Jews, Serbs, gypsies and anti-fascist Croats.

The 35-page indictment says Sakic was responsible for the deaths of at least 2,000 people in Jasenovac. The prosecutor took five months to review documentary evidence and question 46 witnesses, many of them camp survivors, to

compile the case.

Only one senior Ustasha official was ever tried and sentenced in federal Yugoslavia, in the 1980s, and the Sakic trial is the first since Croatia became independent in 1991.

Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, which tracks Nazi war criminals, will observe the Zagreb trial along with reporters from some 50 media organisations who will follow proceedings in the grand chamber of the county court.

"We think the trial has a historic significance... The way it is handled will be a precise indication and proof that Croatia intends to clear up its past," Tommy Baer, head of the Jewish group B'nai B'rith, told Slobodna Dalmacija daily last week.

"The public, Croatian and foreign,

is keen to have him sentenced and to get the whole thing over with," said sociologist Slaven Letica. But he said the complex issue of Croatia's relation to its past goes beyond the courtroom and will take more than a simple trial to disentangle.

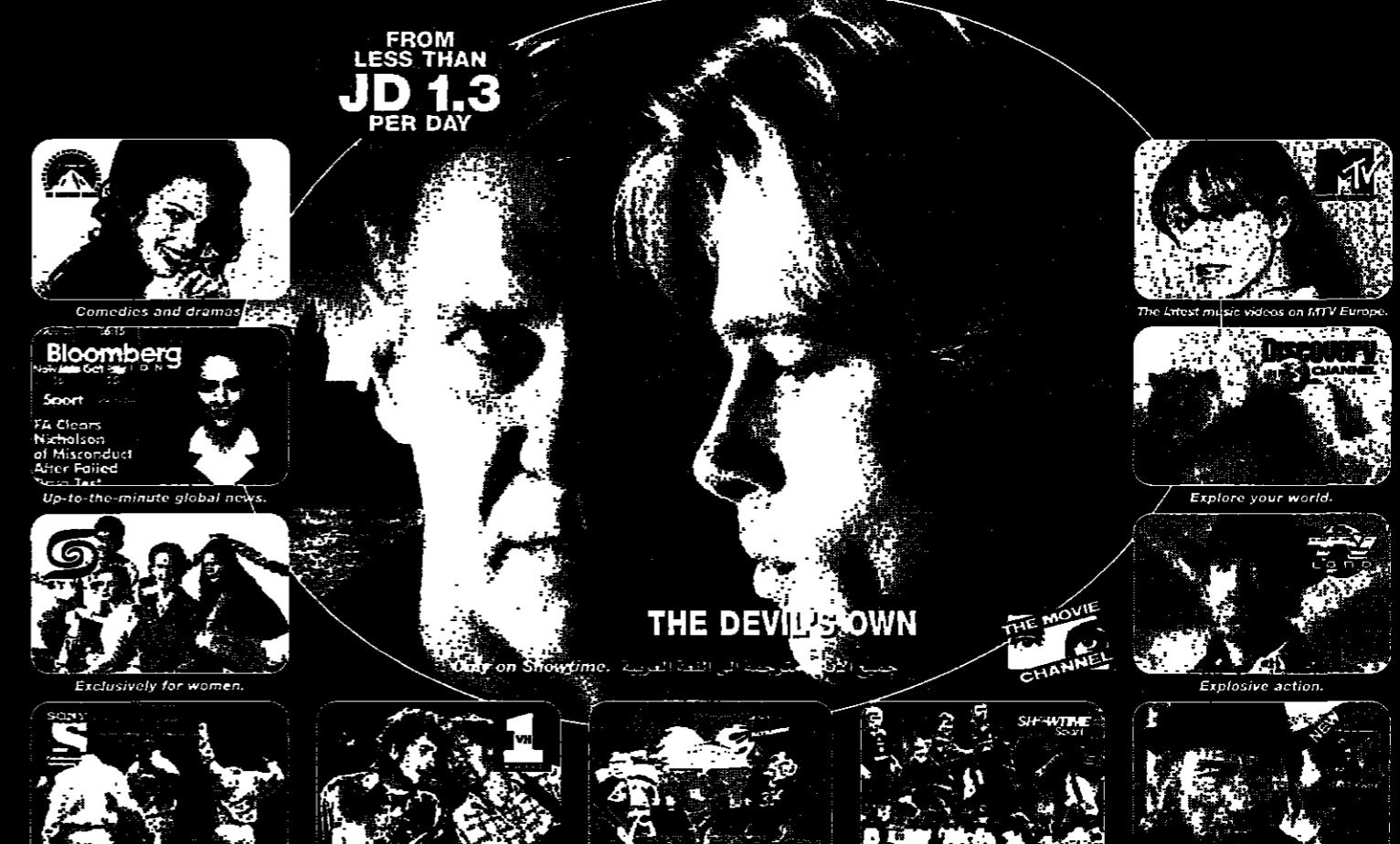
Sakic was extradited from Argentina last June after he discussed his past in a television interview. Like many Nazis who fled Europe for South America after 1945, he had lived there quietly with his family for 50 years.

His wife Nada was sent to Croatia a few months later on similar charges but her case was dropped for lack of evidence.

"I can only hope that this (will be a fair trial) but frankly, the release of Nada has aroused considerable anxiety regarding the judicial process," said Zuroff.

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Israeli elections and peace northwards

ISRAEL IS considering various scenarios for its eventual withdrawal from south Lebanon ranging from full unilateral withdrawal to reducing its occupied cordon to a "mere" three kilometres wide. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speculated on Tuesday that should he be re-elected in the May polls, he would realise full withdrawal from south Lebanon through a deal with Syria within a year, provided the price is right, or affect a unilateral withdrawal without such an accord. Labour leader Ehud Barak also pledged a complete withdrawal by June of next year if he is declared Israel's new premier come May 17. But it was retired General Amnon Shahak of the Centrist Party under General Yitzhak Mordechai who pointed out the obvious Tuesday. Shahak said that without a peace agreement with Syria, the Israeli northern border will never be quiet.

There is, therefore, a growing consensus in Israel that a secure and safe Israeli border in the north can never be realised without a peace pact with Syria. Even the most modest and humble observers on both sides of the fence reached a similar conclusion, many years ago. All the killing and destruction on both sides could have been avoided if only Israel took earlier note of the obvious and pursued peace with Syria not only for the sake of the safety of its northern border but also for the benefit of its northeastern frontier with Syria.

It is ironic that the Israeli prime minister has yet to comprehend that without a comprehensive and just peace with all the Arab parties the peace treaties it has concluded with Egypt and Jordan will continue to be strained. Sooner or later Israel will have to make peace with Syria and Lebanon, and the sooner this is done the better for all sides. Despite all these obvious facts, Netanyahu still searches for a peace deal with Syria which is not "very costly." By that he means full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, something which appears repugnant to his ideology. On the other hand, we all know only too well that Syria will never strike a deal with Israel short of the complete liberation of its occupied territories. And why should it?

We presume that if Barak wins the upcoming elections, he will follow in the footsteps of the late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin who was on the verge of concluding an equitable accord with Damascus. If Mordechai wins, he too will be open-minded on such a settlement with Syria. Only Netanyahu appears adamant on the extent of his willingness to make peace with all his Arab neighbours. The Israeli voters will have to decide, therefore, on whom they can pin more hope for peace when they cast their votes in May.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'a's Tamer Adwan said the Iraqi situation is moving towards a war of attrition with the U.S. and UK, a logical consequence of the crisis. The problem is no longer an Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis, but an argument over UNSCOM's performance, rather it is a direct confrontation between Iraq and both Western countries, argued Adwan. Neither the no-fly zone in southern and northern Iraq nor the plans for "liberating Iraq" were initiated by the UN Security Council, said the writer. These developments in the Iraqi situation require in turn new international and regional political ideas to deal with what has been happening in the region since 1991. Although the Security Council, along with Arab and non-Arab countries are "out of the picture," they must find a certain mechanism to meet such a war of attrition, establish comprehensive solutions and preserve peace and security in the region. The situation of "silence" against the military escalation in Iraq will cause more losses for the Iraqis, and talk about changing the regime there is an unrealistic objective, said Adwan.

Al Dustour's Yasser Zureiq quoted the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi reporting a secret Arab Gulf decision to freeze weapon deals with the U.S. and UK in response to the drop in oil prices. Zureiq said if the report is true the decision will be the most important one taken, in efforts to confront the U.S. "conspiracy" which aims to destroy oil prices and then destroy the Gulf economies. Although there was no official statement about the issue, it is nonsense to think that the Gulf states were not aware of the reason behind the drop in the prices, added Zureiq. The writer said that in an article, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein discovered the "scandal" and put the blame on the "American-Zionist" powers and the Gulf countries, which, according to the Iraqi president, were partners in the conspiracy. Saddam Hussein's article included an important analysis of attempts to destroy oil prices by establishing the International Energy Agency and approving a "terrifying" storage policy, which increased the U.S. oil reserve to 6 billion barrels in 1998, according to Zureiq. The problem is that the U.S. is not satisfied with what it has done to the Arab and Gulf economies, but wants to blackmail them through weapon deals, he said. It is almost obvious that there is a general Arab and Gulf problem concerning the oil prices, and it seems that all possible regulations are useless, said Zureiq.

Fund-raising: Will it succeed in our society?

View from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubah

I HAVE always believed that fund-raising is an important solution to the financial difficulties our universities, like most universities worldwide, have been passing through for some time now. My assumption has always been that there is no reason why fund-raising campaigns in this part of the world ought not yield the expected results. The time has come for me to test the validity of both my belief and assumption.

Before I talk about the fund-raising campaign in which I am currently involved, let me delve into some history, psychology and sociology surrounding the issue.

For sometime, the whole philosophy of fund-raising has been almost entirely absent from our institutional psyche. Our universities, at one point in time, were limited in number. The funds contributed by the state were enough to go around. University administrators then could almost do miracles.

Buildings were built in abundance, the most sophisticated equipment could be easily acquired, and faculty members revelled in grants and conference allowances. I remember some colleagues of mine at a state university where I worked for ten years going to four conferences a year. Something decent but beneficial nonetheless.

Today the picture is radically (I would say ruthlessly) different. Do you know that one of our biggest problems at the University of Jordan (UJ) is space? Take for example offices for faculty members. How many faculties' members are there in an office? In some colleges and departments one, which is the ideal situation. A faculty member needs the privacy of the office to prepare for his/her classes and grade papers in peace. But he/she also needs it for consultation hours with students.

Have you ever witnessed two professors (one of them with a particularly loud voice) talking to their students simultaneously: one debating a matter in linguistics, another in literature?

Chomsky and Chaucer could intertwine in ways you cannot imagine. And what if one professor is a native speaker of German and the other of Chinese, as the case is in the department I am presently chairing? Very interesting indeed.

There are many cases at my university in which three, four and – yes – five faculty members share an office. Imagine what the office hour is like: in a department of foreign languages, it is a global beehive. Don't think I am joking.

Forget about offices and professors; some may think we are reading in the realm of luxury here. Let's talk about students, the cornerstone of the educational experience — the customers whom we aim to serve to the best of our ability. What are their classes like? Beehives again. Of course, there are sections in which you find 25 or 30 students (one out of twenty, that is). The vast majority of classes are packed. In the language skills classes, with which I am amply familiar, instead of the ideal number of 25 or 30, we have in most of our classes 60, 70 and at times 80 students.

Why? We do not have enough lecture halls. It is as simple as that. We have just been through an add-drop period, and getting a larger room from the registrar for your ever-increasing class is like asking Benjamin Netanyahu to give you East Jerusalem back. Again, I am not joking. I have digressed. I was saying that our university administrators, in the good old days, did not even think about fund-raising. State funds and grants of sorts were ample enough. Besides, we have been brought up to a

culture where the government is supposed to be a provider for everyone.

What is the government for after all? A government is like a parent in our society. A couple of decades ago, when my friend and I were debating our wish to pursue our studies, the matter for my friend was settled. He said: "My father brought me into this world; he should take care of my studies?" The same logic applies to government in our part of the world.

This is an important historic, cultural and sociological fact.

But historic, cultural and sociological facts do change over time. When the number of our state universities increased tremendously, state funds became meagre indeed. The number increased some more, and the funds began to be more meagre. What do you do? Well, what do others do? Partnerships with industry. Where are the industries in our part of the world with which we can have partnerships? And are we qualified enough as academic institutions for such partnerships? Well, what do you do? You have to look for funds from institutions other than the state.

Where? Organisations abroad? Where else? Well, may be institutions and individuals from within the country.

But isn't asking for funds like begging? Another sociological fact. You can raise funds for charity or for needy or handicapped people, but for an educational institution? Who would want to donate? And they may do it for the science or business colleges. Interests and connections play a part in this. But who would do it for the poor — maybe, in the eyes of some, even obsolete or irrelevant — scholars and students in the humanities, social sciences, and languages? Despite these reservations, some of us at the UJ think that fund-raising is possible; and

we think that some (perhaps many) in our society or country are willing to donate to the social sciences, arts, humanities and languages.

I am involved in a campaign for support of languages. The Language Centre at the UJ is presently entrusted with the task of teaching language communication skills in both Arabic and English (and this is a very recent development) to all incoming university students — over five thousand of them. The basic argument is that language communication skills empower students. For one thing, such skills help them become more assertive, and thus, happier and more fulfilled. Psychologically, a person who can express is healthier than one who does not. For another, they enable them to have access to a wealth of knowledge in these two vital languages, thus deepening their knowledge of their subjects and of disciplines beyond.

Furthermore, and perhaps equally importantly, they increase their chances of employment tremendous. Human resources development (for both women and men) is a must in today's world, and UJ's Language Centre aims to do that, precisely.

The university does support the centre but it cannot provide it with much that it needs. Much necessary equipment is lacking; space is a big problem; offices of instructors are unbelievably inadequate; and students' lecture halls are packed. We need computers, educational audio-visual material, modern labs, etc.

Though neither experts nor experienced with fund-raising, we aim to raise the necessary funds needed for our noble objectives. We aim to seek out the support of individuals and institutions who believe in student empowerment and human resources development. Some individuals in our society are computer literate, Internet literate, literate in the most sophisticated of technologies. Others to the needs of whom the Language Centre plans to cater, have seen computers only in pictures and have heard about the Internet only second and third-hand. It is time that such deserving students (many of whom come from very unprivileged areas) had access to what others have access to. Equality of opportunity is a must.

Will fund-raising efforts in our society succeed? Will some among us contribute to the poverty-stricken disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and languages? We certainly hope so.

There must be some good souls out there who are willing to chip in. Our higher education institutions in general need your support.

I read in every issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education news about donors to universities who contribute in the hundreds of thousands and in millions. Will we soon start reading about fellow countrymen and friends residing in the country doing the same, on top of the few — very few — that is, who contribute regularly?

A tale of two cities

Developing World



Riad al Khouri

the present circumstances will not permit? For those of you not familiar with the Lebanese economy over the past few years, the end of the civil war in 1991 was followed by a considerable amount of reconstruction. The bad news is that this has landed the country in considerable internal and external debt, with the economic growth needed to allow it to be paid off still a distant prospect. Instead of a "return" of the pre-civil war Beirut, a proper bubble and subsequent bust demoralised investors, and the city today is full of fancy projects and grandiose schemes which remain uncompleted or underutilised. In fact the reconstructed business centre of the city looks like an attractive woman all dressed up with nowhere to go.

Minister Corm's remarks were meant to be provocative and inject a new sense of priorities among the Lebanese. What he and others are calling for is more attention to sectors other than international financial services and expensive urban development. Trying to revive or develop riches in manufacturing and agriculture would be one of the alternatives to assigning Beirut the pseudo-role of the London, New York, or Zurich of the Arab World.

Meanwhile back in Amman, our fourth year of slump and the collapse of hopes for a peace dividend have made people increasingly realistic. In the current state of the economy, there is absolutely no risk of our minister of industry or central bank governor declaring that, say, Wasfi Tel/Gardens Street is to become the Silicon Valley of the region or that Shmeisani is going to

emerge as the Wall Street of the Arab World. On the whole, the end of such cliché-mongering is a good thing, with our government officials' public statements coming ever more down to earth. Still, it would be nice to have a Jordanian George Corm stand up and deliver some home truths about the country's economy.

Alas, there would be no shortage of topics about which to be scathing: water, traffic, foreign investment, education, vocational training, and insurance are among the few that come to mind. Take the latter: Making up a scant two per cent of GNP, as compared to five times that level in developed countries, nevertheless insurance suits make up seven per cent of the cases brought before Jordanian courts. This is partly an indication of the unprofessionalism of many in the country's insurance sector.

Another sorry statistic concerning Jordanian insurance is the existence of 26 companies in a country of 4.5 million people and a GNP of not much more than \$7 billion.

Denmark, with an only slightly larger population but a vastly larger economy has three insurance companies. It may not be fair to compare Amman's insurers to Copenhagen's, and I should also mention that the Lebanese insurance sector has some of the same problems as Jordan's. My point is simply that this business, like so many others in Jordan and other parts of the Middle East, is in bad shape and ripe for extensive reform and development; and to talk about our economies and capital cities in falsely glowing terms just disguises the problems and delays the solution.

Living like human beings

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttob

getting necessary treatment. These travel agonies are not restricted to Palestinians. Before the latest closure a famous Egyptian singer was invited to sing in Palestine. In a major coup, the Jericho Winter Festival succeeded in signing up Hani Shaker, who is to young Arab teenagers what the Beatles were to American teenagers in the 1960s. Shaker and his 30 piece band arrived at Gaza International Airport at 8 a.m. on February 24 the night before the opening festivities. Organisers felt that such an important singer would be able to go through passport control and travel the two hour journey with enough time to get to Jericho where thousands of fans were anxiously waiting for him. Eleven hours after their plane landed in Gaza, a tired and humiliated singer and band arrived in Jericho and decided that they would not be able to do anything that night much to the disappointment of over thousands of Palestinians who had come to see the opening night ceremonies and meet their idol.

Despite the disappointment Palestinians packed out the new Jericho stadium the following night and greatly enjoyed the show. Hani Shaker's included two new songs written just for the occasion. A young teenager climbed on stage and kissed the Egyptian star which made 15,000 teenage fans (75 per cent of whom were teenage girls) go crazy.

Hani Shaker, who spoke in a press conference about the humiliations he faced from the Israelis, ended his concert with one of his most famous songs entitled "Mistake," leaving his fans worrying whether he was referring to the humiliation of coming to Palestine while the Israelis are still in charge of border crossings.

Kosovars and Kurds

By Pascal B. Karmy

IT IS most unfortunate that Western states apply double standards vis-a-vis the Kurds of Turkey on the one hand and the Albanians of Kosovo on the other. They support the national aspirations and rights of the Albanians while they brand the Kurds of Turkey outlaws and terrorists.

NATO has gone to the extent of threatening to launch air strikes against Serbia if it does not bow to the wishes of Europe and America. The Kurds of Turkey count about fifteen million people while the Albanians of Kosovo count less than two million. This is not to say that the Albanians of Kosovo should not have their own autonomy, but that the Kurds deserve likewise to have self-rule within the jurisdiction of the Turkish state.

Protagonists of human rights claim that the Kurds of Turkey have been subjected to oppression and repression by the Turkish security forces particularly after the PKK launched its fight for freedom and independence. The recent capture, imprisonment and perhaps eventual hanging of Ocalan by Turkey will surely not solve the Kurdish problem; on the contrary it will exacerbate it.

The question that should be asked is: Why are Western states, including the U.S., considering granting wide autonomy to the Kosovar Albanians, who count less than two million

people, while they are totally ignoring the rights and national aspirations of the Kurds of Turkey, who count about fifteen million people if not more. The answer goes without saying: Turkey is an ally of the U.S. and is a member of the NATO alliance. But is this the justice of the so-called New World Order? To ignore the oppressed and to implicitly if not explicitly encourage the big and mighty to continue the oppression? I have always claimed that the right of resistance and rebellion against injustice and oppression is a God-given natural right, just as the Europeans resisted and fought the Nazis during occupation. And it must be remembered that most of the states, if not all, in Asia, Africa and the Americas obtained their freedom and independence after long struggles and resistance against imperialist powers.

Ocalan is now in the hands of the Turks, and it is hoped that he will get a fair trial according to the rules of justice. He must be given the full opportunity to defend himself and be allowed to appoint the lawyers of his choice to defend him.

The writer was an advocate in Palestine in 1944 and for many years legal officer at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut and Vienna

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Features

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, March 4-5, 1999

7

The British departure and the mufti of Jerusalem

Newly uncovered secret documents reveal that in 1949 the British government was prepared to break any moral barrier to save its retreating army in Palestine. Here was a ghostly prelude to 50 years of Arab-Israeli conflict

By Robert Fisk

AFTER WORLD War II, Palestine was crumbling. A "hell-disaster," Churchill called it. Menachem Begin's Irgun had blown up British headquarters at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, the British were executing Jewish "terrorists," and the Jews had hanged two kidnapped British army sergeants. The Arabs were determined to destroy the future Jewish state of Israel. The old imperial mandate was in a state of incipient civil war. You have only to open Colonial Office file 537/2643 to understand why, in their moment of agony, the British toyed with the idea of negotiating with an Arab cleric whom they had, only two years earlier, tried to extradite as a war criminal.

Indeed, in 1941 Haj Amin Al Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, had been chatting to Hitler in Berlin, urging the Reich to prevent the departure of European Jews to Palestine; and two years later he had been helping to raise a Muslim SS battalion in Sarajevo to fight on the Russian front. Later on, claiming ignorance of the Jewish Holocaust, he told the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop in 1944 that if Jews were to be "removed" from Germany, "it would be infinitely preferable to send them to other countries where they would find themselves under active control [sic], as for example, Poland..."

When he attempted to flee Germany in 1945, the French captured the grand mufti, but allowed him to escape to Egypt. In 1947 he turned up in Lebanon as leader of the Palestinian Arabs, a powerful and influential voice that could pacify — or provoke — an Arab uprising against Britain in its last days of rule in Palestine.

No wonder, then, that the old Colonial Office file was not released under the usual 30-year rule, but kept secret for half a century. Its contents — astonishingly, they were overlooked by historians on their release last month — speak not only of hidden contacts in Cairo, but also of imperial despair in Palestine and, most dramatically, of outrage at

Jewish "reprisals" against Arab civilians which constituted, according to the British High Commissioner, "an offence to civilisation." Indignation and fury permeate the file. So does defeat.

On December 15, 1947, Lieutenant General Sir Alan Cunningham sent a top secret memorandum to the British Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech-Jones, outlining the civil war in Palestine in fearful detail. "Situation now is deteriorating," he wrote, "into a series of reprisals and counter-reprisals between Jews and Arabs, in which many innocent lives are being lost, the tempo of which may accelerate... I have been considering what steps could be taken to mitigate this dangerous situation. As far as the Arabs are concerned it is undoubtedly a fact that word from the mufti in the right quarter is probably now the only chance of inducing them to hold their hand until we have gone."

Haj Amin had arrived in newly independent Lebanon in early October 1947, and the British legation in Beirut immediately set out to discover how much freedom he would be given. The grand mufti's sudden appearance, the legation noted, had not surprised the Lebanese prime minister, Riad Sohl, but the Lebanese insisted that "a member of the Surete" was in constant attendance on Haj Amin, that his activities would be "controlled and restricted" by the Lebanese and that he "would not be allowed to indulge in any activities directed against British interests." As our diplomats in Beirut were well aware, however, the British Middle East Office in Cairo had already made contact with the man whom Britain and the Allied Forces Command in Europe regarded as a war criminal.

On September 29, our man in Cairo had sent a secret note to the Foreign Office enclosing the report of an interview with the mufti from "an unimpeachable source." The carefully typed notes — presumably from a British intelligence officer — portray a man who realised that disaster faced the Arabs of Palestine. The mufti refused to contemplate the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. "He was not bargaining with the Zionists about a possession in dispute," says the report. "Palestine, including Jaffa and the Negev, belonged to the Arabs, and he did not recognise the right of anyone to 'offer' them what

was their as a condition of consent to partition. It was like a robber trying to make conditions on which he would return stolen property." Besides, Haj Amin said, "no form of partition... would finally satisfy the Zionists. Whatever they got would merely be a springboard from which to leap on more."

The grand mufti, who had supported the Arab Revolt against British rule in the thirties and had subsequently sought refuge in Iraq after a pro-German coup, then lectured his interviewee in words that must have taken the Briton's breath away. "Put yourselves in the Arabs' place," Haj Amin advised. "Remember yourselves in 1940. Did you ever think of offering the Germans part of Britain on condition that they let you alone in the rest? Of course not, and you never will." The answer to partition or a federal Palestine was "NO, categorically NO." Jews would have the same rights as Arabs in a Palestinian nation, "but the Arabs would never agree to any bestowal on the Zionists of political power or privilege that put them above... the Palestinian state government."

There was no reason why Arabs and the British should not cooperate, Haj Amin said. But common interests "should not deceive the British into thinking that any Arab leader would weaken where Palestine was concerned... Palestinian Arab enmity towards the British was purely political — they hated the policy that had founded... the Zionist national home." If Britain did not support Zionist claims to Palestine, and rejected partition, "she would gain Arab friendship in a moment." But if the British continued their support, "they could never hope for Arab cooperation, for the Arabs would then be cooperating in bringing about their own destruction."

Then, in words which have an ironic historical resonance, the grand mufti talked of the future. "He did not fear the Jews, their Stern, Irgun, Haganah [gangs]. The Arabs might lose at first, they would have many losses, but in the end they must win." The Zionists "will eventually crumble into nothing, and he did not fear the result, unless of course Britain or America... intervened, and even then the Arabs would fight and the Arab World would be perpetually hostile."

When his British visitor suggested that the Arabs might do better to accept part of Palestine rather than

risk losing all, Haj Amin replied: "Who are we? A handful of exiles. Nothing. But we shall never give in or surrender our principles no matter what bribe is offered."

Should the British talk directly to Haj Amin? As fighting continued in Palestine, the British legation in Beirut reported to the Foreign Office on November 27 that Haj Amin "no longer regards us as Arab public enemy No. 1" but "if a decision unfavourable to the Arabs is reached at the United Nations... it is probable that the ex-mufti [sic] will be exposed to pressure from his extremist followers... Contact even of a most informal sort with British officials might serve as a safety valve." The British memorandum, marked "Secret," adds that although Haj Amin's "dubious past renders the prospect of even unofficial contact with him distasteful," it could not be denied "that he enjoys very considerable prestige and influence and he may still play a part in the future government of Palestine." The mufti had "learnt a lesson through backing the wrong side in the last war" and "advantage might be taken of his anti-Communist leanings."

Sohl had already offered to arrange a meeting between the mufti and a Beirut-based British diplomat called Evans, over cups of tea — Evans had been "non-committal" to the idea — but "I think it would be all to the good for a member of my staff to see him occasionally," the Legation head wrote. It would now pay the British "hand over fist" to exert any influence to avoid a wholesale clash with Palestinian Arabs. Meeting the mufti as "an individual" would not mean "that His Majesty's government had abandoned their principles or condoned the mufti's misguided [sic] past... if... he has had a change of heart, mild and discreet contacts with the British might give him a chance to prove it. If the leopard still the same we shall soon find the sports under his henna."

Beneath this eloquent letter, the British diplomat had added in his own hand the damning remark that the U.S. assistant military attaché in Lebanon had already paid a visit to the mufti. By mid-December, General Cunningham was pleading from Jerusalem for pressure on Haj Amin "to get him to dissuade local Arabs from further violence... while we are still here." But, the High Commissioner noted, "it is clear that we can-

not approach the Arabs without taking parallel action against the Jews. We are, of course, doing all we can to point out to Jews the unmitigated folly of their action which can only end in future bitterness which may well in the end mean disaster for their new state." Jewish claims that their actions were carried out by "dissident groups" had proved to be untrue and "it can be seen that the Jews have inflicted many more casualties on the Arabs than the reverse. Practically all [Jewish] attacks have been against buses or in civilian centres."

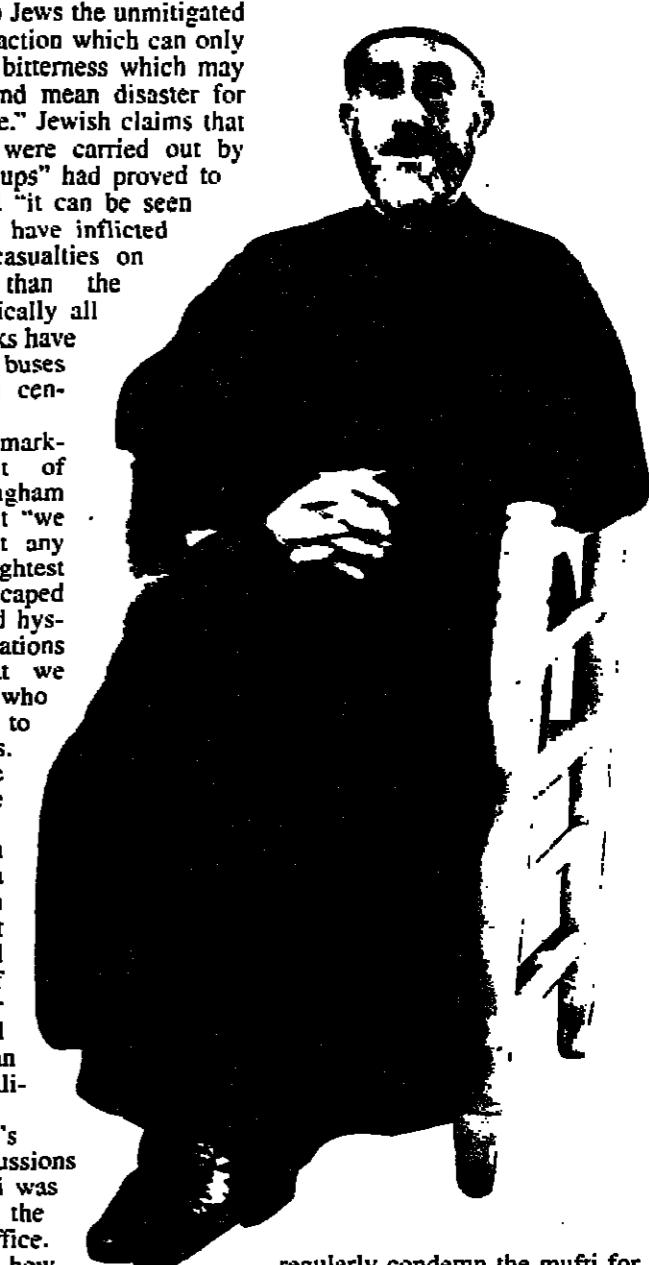
And, in a remarkable moment of anger, Cunningham concluded that "we have never at any time on the slightest excuse escaped vociferous and hysterical accusations by Jews that we were a people who were prone to brutal reprisals. Now they [the Jews] have themselves come out with reprisals of a kind which would not have crossed the mind of any soldier here, and which are an offence to civilisation."

Cunningham's plea for discussions with the mufti was forwarded to the Foreign Office. Within days, however, the legation in Beirut was ordered to make no contact with Haj Amin. British MPs had long demanded his trial for war crimes, and so the British departed from Palestine in disgrace, leaving Arab and Jew to fight for the land. Three-quarters of a million Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes. The Arabs did not eventually win, as Haj Amin had predicted, and the 51-year-old Israeli state did not end in disaster as Cunningham had suggested it might. Israeli spokesman

regularly condemn the mufti for his flirtation with Nazism, and have sought to demonise the Palestinians with his name. But recent research suggests that he was an Arab nationalist rather than a national socialist — his fairest biographer is a former Israeli military governor of the occupied West Bank.

The mufti died in Beirut in 1974, ignored and largely forgotten even in Lebanon. Among the mourners at his funeral was Yasser Arafat.

— The Independent



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Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Thursday-Friday, March 4-5, 1999 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation hiked operations by around 29 per cent last year

** THE JORDAN Loan Guarantee Corporation received 731 inquiries that carried a total value of JD13.8 million last year but the balance of guaranteed loans at the end of 1998 stood at around JD8.7 million, a 28.9 per cent increase over the balance at the end of 1997. Since August 1994 until December 1998 the corporation received a total of 1,760 inquiries that carried a JD33.5 million gross value but the balance of the guaranteed amount was JD17.4 million, said Jamal Salah, the corporation's general manager.

Salah indicated that the services sector accounted for 60.8 per cent of the inquiries followed by the industrial, craft and vocational sector which accounted for 29.2 per cent. At 7.1 per cent and 2.9 per cent, the commercial and agricultural sectors ranked in third and fourth places respectively. 55.2 per cent of the projects were within the Municipality of Greater Amman and the remaining 44.8 per cent were in other parts of the Kingdom.

During 1998, the number of guaranteed loans under execution was 666, 70 per cent of which were in the services sector and 20.4 per cent were in the industrial, craft and vocational sectors. The commercial and agricultural sectors accounted for 8.9 per cent and 0.7 per cent respectively.

Salah revealed that the growth in the number of guaranteed loans under execution last year was 31 per cent over the 1997 figure. He indicated that the value

of credits extended to these loans amounted to JD12.4 million and that the balance of the guaranteed amount stood at JD7.7 million. The average amount for each loan was JD19,000, he said.

The general manager said around 7,000 workers were employed in all the projects. "That is to say, the corporation, by guaranteeing the risks of loans directed to these projects, was able to maintain this side of work opportunities," Salah said noting that 3.2 per cent of the loans guaranteed by the corporation ran into troubles.

As to the programme of export credit guarantee, Salah said the corporation received, until the end of last year, 34 inquiries with a JD2.1 million value for the pre shipping stage. Out of this number, 24 loans valued at JD1.78 million were carried out. Thirteen loans for JD850,000 were repaid and the outstanding until now are 11 loans for JD931,000.

The after shipping stage covered five contracts last year for a total amount of JD3.8 million, Salah said. He concluded by preferring to the 1998 closing financial results which showed that the corporation posted JD1.4 million in net carryings last year. It is expected that the net profit will be JD455,000 noting that the corporation's assets rose by 4.4 per cent to JD565,000 and shareholders' equity by 5.1 per cent to JD546,000 (Al Arab Aj Yawm).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A compromise is possible, but you may not want to give up anything. Think again — you have more than enough. Too much, even. Besides, if you make a generous contribution, you retain more authority. You and your adversary may never agree, on your own. Too many egos involved. A mutual friend brings the perfect new concept.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You work hard for the money, but today it might feel like you're working for free. Actually, you're making points, and that could be even more important. Someone in a position to help your fortune considerably is watching, and taking notes.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You are looking very good today, and most likely making a great impression. But again, that could lead to trouble. Looks like everybody wants your time and attention. Instead of picking A or B, a third option that shows up today could be best choice.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your intuition should still be good, so use it. A roommate or close family member is in a cantankerous mood. You'll never win by arguing. Instead, take the subtle, roundabout route.

Prepare the special meal this person loves tonight, and you may get what you want without saying another word about it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There's a little more confusion today, but nowhere near as much as you've been through lately. Things are actually starting to calm down. Although there will still be a few rough spots, the final outcome today should be beneficial. That's especially true if you make up with a person with whom you've been arguing. Forgive and forget.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) One thing's for sure, there'll be lots of surprises today. Don't take anything for granted. Just because it worked once doesn't mean it'll work again. Just the opposite is more likely.

Don't worry, though. Another unexpected development puts everything right again. Be patient, and wear your seatbelt.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Back and forth, up and down, in and out. Which way should you turn next? Knowing you, it'll probably be all of the above. You're usually willing to try just about anything to see what's happen. Today, that could be very interesting. A person you thought you knew very well could surprise you, too.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You could get tangled up today in red tape. The machinery's working fine; it's the people who are the problem. Somebody else's inability to make a decision could throw you off your schedule. You hate to just step in and take over, but you may have to do just that. Don't let somebody else's Ditz Day ruin yours.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You ought to be one place, and you want to be another. A new technology could help you be both places almost simultaneously. You may already know what it is, but not know how to use it. If there's something that fits that description, put in a little extra study time. A friend would love to help.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) An excellent career opportunity could open up today, almost by accident. If you've been thinking about the job you'd like to have, you'll know it when you see it. You should be doing work you love, and getting paid what you're worth. If you're not, check out the want ads.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You've been learning all week, and now you could get a chance to teach. The flow of ideas is stimulating, and also creative. One idea leads to another, almost more quickly than you can keep up. Don't be doing all this studying just for the fun of it. Make it pay.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Money is an issue again today. Looks like it's coming into your account, which is wonderful. Of course, you'd like to spend it on gifts, but hold back a little. The best gift of all is the one you'll give to yourself when you're old and gray: a big, fat retirement account.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Commercial electronic trade to hit one trillion dollars by 2003

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Electronic commerce (e-commerce) among companies could exceed one trillion dollars worldwide by 2003, far outstripping consumer spending over the internet, Visa International said Wednesday.

The global credit card company said a survey by Wharton economic forecasting associates group on its behalf showed that Asia would account for nearly 20 per cent of "commercial e-commerce" by 2003.

In a statement, Visa International said the global estimate of one trillion dollars — representing a compounded annual growth rate of 69 per cent — is significantly higher than previous forecasts.

By comparison, consumer spending over the internet is forecast at \$100 billion by 2002.

"It is a major indication of the way in which companies will be doing business over the next decade and reveals how electronic commerce has the potential to dramatically reshape the business-to-business mar-

ketplace," the statement said.

The survey covered 17 countries believed to account for 85 per cent of the total market opportunity. In the countries covered, 94 per cent of purchase volume is expected to be focused on just five countries: Britain, France, Germany, Japan and the United States.

The U.S. market represents a staggering 59 per cent of volume, with Europe and Asia roughly splitting the remainder.

Service and manufacturing companies will be the leading users, followed by government and education, financial services and retailers.

"While the Internet currently accounts for 95 per cent of electronic commerce activity, by 2003, 27 per cent will be carried over extranets," the Visa statement said.

Extranets are computer-networks that link a company to a supplier or supplier network, creating a related community of specific companies and suppliers, it added.

Construction of industrial port to be completed in two years

AMMAN — The construction work of a JD18 million industrial port at Aqaba is expected to be finalised in the coming two years, an official said Wednesday.

costs around JD16 million will funded by the private sector," he said.

The bid's period is 640 days.

The project is a part of the government's efforts to prepare the port city of Aqaba to meet the ever increasing number of shipping traffic (importing and exporting), said Naser Madadheh, director of the Tender Department at the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

The project includes high technology controlling systems, safety and loading and unloading facilities to rapidly meet exporting requirements.

The new project also aims at attracting investors to the southern city due to the expected increase in trade in the coming years," he added.

The industrial port will be 47.5 metre long, 25.5 wide and 15 metres depth. It is expected to receive ships carrying as much as 50,000 tonnes of goods a day.

The new port will back the older port in providing speed and flexibility in handling exports and imports," Madadheh told the Jordan Times.

"The project's cost will be JD2 million for the civil work which will be funded by the European Bank for Investment while the mechanical part [machines and technology] which

part for the new industrial port," said Madadheh.

The government has asked a consultancy office to make a feasibility study for the two-year project in order to determine the manner in which the bid will be offered, [BOT or BOO], he added as saying.

The Port of Aqaba in 1991 received a major blow after sanctions were imposed against Iraq for invading Kuwait. Jordan is considered the main outlet for Iraq to the rest of the world.

A.F.M TRADE ACCESS 4646868

	BANKS	INSURANCE	SERVICES	INDUSTRY	PARALLEL
ARAB BK	223.000	221.000	-0.90%		
INT'L BK	1.470	1.420	-3.40%		
BL OF JORDAN	1.320	1.320	0.00%		
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.470	1.420	-3.40%		
THE HOUSING BK	2.780	2.810	+1.08%		
J.C. KUWAIT BK	1.630	1.630	0.00%		
JO. GULF BK	0.650	0.640	+1.56%		
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.700	1.680	-1.18%		
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.530	0.520	-1.85%		
				BANKS INDEX	287.100 point = -0.73%
				INSURANCE INDEX	125.170 point = -0.25%
				SERVICES INDEX	114.250 point = +0.18%
				INDUSTRY INDEX	95.500 point = +0.10%
				PARALLEL	
EXPORT BK 75Z	0.940	0.950	+1.06%		
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.420	0.410	-2.38%		
UNION INVEST. CORP.	0.870	0.870	-1.15%		
AL-RAZZAK	0.770	0.770	0.00%		
ADVANCED PHAR	0.520	0.520	0.00%		
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.030	3.040	+0.33%		
CERAMIC IND	1.270	1.260	-0.79%		
JO. COFFEE & CIGARET	1.520	1.490	-1.97%		
ARAB CHEMICAL DETER.	7.050	7.350	+4.26%		
BAR AL-DAWA	6.150	6.140	-0.16%		
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.560	0.550	-1.78%		
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PETRO-CHEMICAL	0.280	0.280	-3.45%		
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.620	0.600	-3.44%		
INT'L CABLE	0.480	0.460	-4.17%		
EQUITY-HO. CHEMICALS	0.410	0.400	-2.44%		
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.580	0.580	0.00%		
WORLD TRADE SERVICES	0.570	0.570	0.00%		
NEW CAPLES	0.570	0.570	0.00%		
INT'L ALUMINUM	0.750	0.750	0.00%		
				GRAND INDEX	182.28 point = -0.48%

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

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Records under threat at World Indoor Athletics Championships

MAEBASHI, Japan (AFP) — Records will be under threat at the World Indoor Athletics Championships which start here Friday with Maurice Greene, Haile Gebrselassie, Maria Mutola and Gabriela Szabo leading the charge.

All have broken or nudged world marks in the past month and vowed to do better in the green dome Maebashi.

And with veteran sprinter Frankie Fredericks and new women's pole vault world record holder Nicole Rieger-Humbert also on hot form, there is a promise of three days of thrills at the first indoor world championships to be held in Asia.

Greene ticked his 60-metre sprint record of 6.39sec in the semi-finals of the U.S. Indoor Championships last weekend, winning in 6.40sec, but was incredibly beaten by Tim Harden in the final.

He will be up against training partner Ato Boldon of Trinidad in the blue ribbon contest and, thriving on the competition, predicts the world record will be lowered.

"Every day I learn something new. Training with Boldon and Tim Drummond is always intensive. But that helps my motivation. We

always push each other," Greene insisted ahead of his arrival in Japan.

Making a rare appearance at the indoor championships will be Fredericks, who at the age of 31 can now see time running out in his quest to get top honours to add to his solitary gold from Olympic Games and outdoor World Championships.

The Namibian is in brilliant form having run 19.92sec over 200m outdoors in Melbourne on February 25 and a stunning 100m of 9.94sec in Sydney. "Maybe this is my year," commented Fredericks, who is already acclaimed as one of the greatest sprinters of all time, despite his nearly-miss tag.

If he takes on the 200m, where he is the record holder with a time of 19.92sec, Fredericks will have to take on reigning title holder Kevin Little from the powerful us team.

Ethiopia's Gebrselassie set the new men's 5,000m world record of 12min 50.38sec in Birmingham, England in February.

His aim now is the 3,000m mark of 7:24.90 set by Kenyan arch-rival Daniel Kipen last year in Budapest.

Olympic champion Gail Devers

will be the woman to watch in the sprints, mainly because American rival Marion Jones is avoiding the indoor season as she prepares for the main World Championships in Seville later this year.

But Devers will face the continual challenge of Jamaican Merlene Ottey, at the age of 38 still battling for her first title though she holds the 200m record of 21.87sec.

In the 60m hurdles will be Olga Shishigina of Kazakhstan, who won the silver medal in Paris two years ago — after coming back from a two-year ban for a drug failure.

Shishigina will lead the Asian challenge at the championships, where Mozambique's Mutola will be going for a fourth straight 800m indoor world title. And her confidence is sky high after her 1,000m world record of 2:30.94 set in Stockholm last month — beating her own two year old mark.

Mutola, who only needs an Olympic medal to complete her collection of top honours, wants the title and the 11-year-old world record of 1:56.40 set by East German Christine Wachtel.

The African runner beat Wachtel's time by four hundredths of a second

last year but was disqualified for stepping on the infield on the final bend.

"If I can get over the jetlag then I know the time is within reach," said Mutola.

At the same Stockholm meeting, Germany's Rieger Humbert added her name to the short list of women's pole vault record holders with a leap of 4.56m.

That was one centimetre more than the incredible Australian vaulter Emma George who has been resting a sore shoulder for several weeks so she can compete in Maebashi.

Romania's new running star Szabo took 15 seconds off the old 5,000m mark in Dortmund, Germany last month and days later came within 0.27sec of Dutchwoman Ely Van Hulst's 10-year-old record of 8:33.82 in the 3,000m at a meeting in Lievin in France.

"I feel just right to take on the 3,000m world record at the championships," the 25-year-old Romanian said in training here. "I want to beat the Olympic contenders." she added.



Atletico Madrid defender Toni Munoz (R) challenges AS Roma's Brazilian Paulo Sergio for the ball during their UEFA Cup quarter-final first leg soccer match at Vicente Calderon stadium (AFP photo)

UEFA Cup balance of power evenly spread

PARIS (AFP) — The balance of power among Italian, Spanish and French clubs in the UEFA Cup quarter-finals hung in the balance on Tuesday with only Italy's Bologna overwhelming winners.

Bologna beat French side Lyon 3-0 but there was all to play for in the second leg of the three other matches which had 2-1 scorelines.

Roma fell at Atletico Madrid, Marseille beat Celta Vigo at the Stade Velodrome and Bordeaux won at home against Parma.

It was two goals from back-to-form Florian Maurice which earned Marseille their victory over Celta Vigo as the Riviera Club kept on course to repeat its European glory

Maurice, who had not scored since December 19, found the net in the 33rd and 67th minutes with Russian Alexander Mostovoi equalising in the 64th minute.

Marseille, who won the 1993 European Cup, saw their early domination pay dividends in the 33rd minute when Christophe Dugarry dispossessed Yugoslavia's Goran Djorovic on the edge of Vigo's box and passed to Maurice, who fired home.

Former Strasbourg midfielder Mostovoi brought the scores level on 64 minutes after stroking the ball home after Stephane Porato had been scrambling for the ball at full stretch.

The goal was virtually inevitable as Marseille have only kept one clean sheet in 1999 — their 1-0 win over Strasbourg on Thursday.

Great work from Robert Pires allowed Maurice to put Marseille back in front three minutes later.

Heineken's cross from the right, completely fooling the defender, which left him plenty of time to pick out unmarked Maurice who easily fired past Richard Dutruel.

However, Marseille coach

Roland Courbis, who tipped Vigo as favourites before the start of the tie, knows they have their work to do to make the semi-finals in the second leg in Spain.

Success in the return match would not go amiss to Marseille fans, who have seen their club knocked out of both domestic cups by those which had 2-1 scorelines.

Vigo, fourth in the league in Spain and with a formidable midfield unit of Russia's Valery Karpin, compatriot Mostovoi and Brazil's 1994 World Cup winner Mazinho, have already proved their pedigree to beat two former European Cup winners in England's Liverpool and Aston Villa in previous rounds.

Atletico Madrid dominated AS Roma but had to settle for a 2-1 victory over the Spanish in a gritty match.

Romero Jose Mari opened the scoring in the 13th minute and Roberto made it 2-0 just minutes after the restart against a Roma side who failed to create a single clear scoring opportunity.

International midfielder Luigi Di Biagio conjured their goal out of nothing in the 75th minute, blasting a 30-metre free-kick from the roof of Atletico's net to give Roma a chance in the second leg.

Their coach Zdenek Zeman said: "I just hope we can have a good game in Rome. The important thing will be to score a goal and not concede one." Atletico dominated the first half and most of the second, but were relieved to see the referee reject appeals from Roma's Brazilian striker Paulo Sergio for a penalty within minutes of the start.

Giuseppe Signori all but booked Bologna's place in the last four after engineering a convincing victory over Lyon.

Signori scored a goal in each half and then set up the third for Jonathan Binotto

as the Italian side out-gunned their French opponents.

Lyon were a match for their hosts in midfield, but failed to make much headway in the Bologna penalty area and had nobody capable of finishing their best chances.

Signori, whose team started their UEFA campaign in the Intertoto Cup last summer, said: "We've got the right spirit. We set ourselves this objective at the start of the season and we want to see it right through to the end." But having seen Lyon's recent win at the Parc des Princes, he admitted: "We've seen a different Lyon to the one who played against Paris St. Germain."

A late goal by Parma's Argentinian striker Hernan Crespo gave his side hope for a semi-final spot following their defeat at Bordeaux.

Johan Micoud and then Sylvain Wiltord put Bordeaux 2-0 up just before the break and everything looked to be going horribly wrong for Parma when skipper Antonio Benarri was sent off for his second yellow card with eight minutes to play.

But substitute Crespo, who has scored 15 goals to put him second in Italy's scoring list, did once more what he does best to earn a valuable away goal with seconds of the match remaining.

Bordeaux, who reached the UEFA Cup final in 1996 after qualifying through the pre-season Intertoto Cup, will be rueing their late lapse to let in Crespo.

Bordeaux coach Elie Baup said afterwards: "I still believe we can make it to the semifinals as we have never lost away in the UEFA Cup all season. I don't think we lost our way after Parma had a man sent off. Parma's goal was deserved and no one was to blame."

Sydney plans to sell guide on how to organise a major event

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sydney Olympic officials have come up with a novel way of raising much-needed cash — selling information about how they organised the 2000 games.

The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) is putting together a blueprint of "intellectual property" to sell to other countries, chief executive Sandy Holloway said Wednesday.

The idea was to sell information to cities planning major bids and events such as Olympic and Commonwealth Games.

No price had yet been set because at this stage the concept was only being floated, he told reporters.

When SOCOG began it had virtually no guide on how to run a major sporting event, despite input from the International Olympic Committee and the organising committees of Atlanta and Barcelona.

"But we have developed systematic, documented information that we wish to make available," Holloway said.

"If I was a private consultant I would be charging a fortune for this. I do not wish to charge cities a fortune but I'm a very poor man and would like some recompense for this intellectual property."

He said if a city purchased the SOCOG blueprint, the information would be followed up with seminars and contacts with representatives from related government agencies.

Sydney Lord Mayor Frank Sanor said a substantial amount of work had been put in to preparing the blueprint for major events, work which would potentially save future organisers about 12 months of effort.

Australian athletes to be given banned drug in trial

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian athletes will be deliberately injected with a banned performance-enhancing drug to help develop a reliable doping test before the Sydney 2000 Olympics, an official said Wednesday.

Ross Smith, director of sports science at the Australian Institute of Sport, said 22 athletes aged 18 to 35 had volunteered to be given a course of the drug erythropoietin (Epo) during the next five weeks.

Eleven others will be given a placebo.

Epo occurs naturally in humans but some endurance athletes inject it to enhance their performance as it increases the ability of the bloodstream to carry oxygen.

It is not detectable through urine analysis and there is currently no reliable test.

But the AIS said it was confident it could now develop a screening process.

"Their (epo users') blood profile will change, their red blood cells will change in terms of number, age, colour and we'll be able to identify that through the equipment we have," Smith told reporters.

"We guess that the equipment we have now can identify minute changes in blood

profile."

He said it had been difficult to find volunteers for the study because the athletes have to stand out of competition for 14 weeks to allow the drug to leave the body after the five-week programme.

There were also potential health concerns, but the athletes involved would be carefully monitored and the programme had been passed by the AIS ethics committee.

"There are concerns about using Epo if you use too much, but it will be given in small doses under management of physiologists and doctors and the volunteers were all screened for likely adverse effects," he said.

Smith said it was likely AIS scientists will have developed a test for epo by the end of April and he was confident it would be approved in time for the Sydney Games.

"This is just the progress of science trying to catch up with what's happening in the field," he said.

Ronaldo's got psychological problem — Pele

TURIN (AFP) — Soccer legend Pele claimed on Wednesday that Ronaldo's problems are more psychological than physical, and blamed them on Brazil's World Cup coach Mario Zagallo.

Ronaldo, who has been suffering from chronic tendinitis since France 98, hasn't played for his Serie A club Inter Milan since mid-January.

But Pele claims the problem is in the Brazilian's head rather than his knees. And he believes that Zagallo is responsible, for fielding him in last July's World Cup final just hours after suffering a fit.

"His problem is more psychological than physical," Pele wrote in a front-page editorial for Turin sports paper *l'Espresso*.

Zagallo committed a serious error by making him play all 90 minutes of the World Cup final after what happened to him a few hours before. The stress that he underwent was enormous.

"I pray for him," he wrote. Pele also used his editorial to support the growth of big business in football, citing the example of the English Premiership, and to welcome the conduct of Sepp Blatter as FIFA president.

Ronaldo, who has been ever more professional in 2000, and even less managed in an improvised way," he said. "We've had enough of financial holes and slush funds."

"I don't agree with people who see a worrying future and who talk only about football-business. Pay-per-view and cable TV are important for future development... and England and Italy are showing us the way."

TV and sponsorship are the key, Pele argued, "and with Blatter in charge, football will make even more progress."

"His management of FIFA is more democratic than his predecessor," he added, referring to the often criticised style of ex-chief Joao Havelange.

However, Marseille coach

Germany calls for 2-year suspension for drug offences

BONN (AFP) — German minister for the interior Otto Schily on Tuesday called for a minimum suspension of two years for anyone found guilty of taking performance enhancing drugs in sport. The German minister made his comments following a meeting with British sports minister Chris Smith. Europe's 15 sports ministers last month called for the establishment of an international anti-doping agency to deal with the growing problem of drug taking in sport. The "Lausanne Declaration" made during February's world conference on doping in sport fixed a two-year suspension, but was greeted with widespread criticism because it left the door open for exceptions. Europe's sports ministers will formulate their anti-drug policy during a meeting scheduled to take place in Paderborn, Germany from May 31 to June 2. "Only harsh threats will act as a deterrent," added Schily, whose country presently holds the EU presidency.

Hagelauer to help British tennis

PARIS (AFP) — Patrice Hagelauer will leave his post as French national coach at the end of March and work with Britain's top players, French federation national technical director Jean-Claude Massias said on Tuesday. The 50-year-old, ranked No. 12 in France during his playing career, helped the careers of players such as Henri Leconte, Guy Forget and Yannick Noah, whom he coached to the French Open title in 1983. Hagelauer, who also contributed to France's Davis Cup victories in 1991 and 1996, will be working for the lawn tennis association as a performance director in both the men's and women's game.

CINEMA

PHILADELPHIA '1'

Robert De Niro.. in

RONIN

Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

PHILADELPHIA '2'

Tom Hanks & Sally Field .. in

FORREST GUMP

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 9:00

PLAZA

Comedian Adel Imam.. in

AL ZA'EEM

Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CONCORDE

Adel Imam & Wafa' Amer .. in

ALWAD MAHROUS TBA' AL WAZIR

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CONCORDE 2 FEAR</p

Sports

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Swimmers leave for Casablanca

AMMAN — The national swimming team leaves for Morocco Thursday to compete in the Casablanca Tournament as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games, to be held here Aug. 15-31. The delegation is headed by Jacqueline Khouri of the Jordan Swimming Federation (JSF) and includes swimmers Zeid Oteiby, Yazan Khouri, Ala' Wazani, Sa'd Nasser, Omar Abu Firas, Musa Kuskb, Rania Ghousheh, Andre Khouri, Mira Ghneim, Hiba Nasser, Sandri Zreig, Farah Younes and Razan Khouri. Meanwhile, the JSF's Talat Nasser also leaves for Morocco today to hold talks with officials of Arab federations to secure wide-ranging participation in the First Arab Championship for Short-Course Swimming, which will be held next month in Egypt.



Andre Agassi

GP number 100 for Damon Hill

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Former world champion Damon Hill will line up for his 100th grand prix in the season-opening Australian Formula One race at the Albert Park circuit here on Sunday.

Hill, 38, last year thrilled Jordan with the English team's long-awaited breakthrough victory when he snatched the spa GP in Belgium from the McLaren and Ferrari giants.

It was a one-two finish for Jordan with Ralf Schumacher, who moves to Williams this year in a swap with German Heinz Harald Frentzen, taking second.

Hill won back-to-back Australian Grands Prix when he took the last race in Adelaide for Williams in 1995 and the first in Melbourne in 1996, his World Championship winning year.

From being a struggling team Jordan has improved to now challenge Williams and Benetton behind McLaren and Ferrari in the World Championship series, in what team owner Eddie Jordan says will be "an enthralling encounter" this year.

"If winter testing is anything to go by, there are four to five teams who will be battling it out behind McLaren and Ferrari," Jordan said Wednesday.

"Jordan did not make a very impressive start in our first week of testing in Barcelona, but after subsequent work in the drawing office our times improved and we feel we made an important breakthrough."

"Both drivers seem very happy with the car and have been on excellent form, both on and off the track."

Hill said that after winning Spa last year Jordan was now aiming for top-three finishes this season.

"Our objective this year is to be on the podium and to be in with a shout of winning a couple of races," Hill said.

Hill said his 100th race was a landmark but it didn't diminish his enthusiasm for the sport.

"I may have been in Formula One a while but I still get very excited by the start of the season," he said.

"I have a competitive edge which I cannot shake off and driving a Formula One car still gives me a huge thrill," he said.

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. Q73 CJ102 QJ5 AQ1093

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH AST SOUTH WEST

to Pass 7

What do you bid now?

A - If you play that a two-over-one response is a game force, you have no option but to bid. If not, it is a close decision whether to bid two clubs or one no trump. With only one prime card, a doubleton in partner's suit and a balanced hand, we prefer the slight underbid of one no trump.

Q. 2 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:

A. Q2762 CA10754 AKQ3

The bidding has proceeded: SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST

10 Pass 14 Pass

What do you bid now?

A - Another close decision on a tough hand to bid. The choice lies between one no trump, a waiting bid of two clubs and two diamonds. The experts' choice is probably two clubs. For simpler souls, we are not thrilled with inventing a rebid on a three-card suit, but to rebid two diamonds with a minor suit is even worse. So we will take our medicine and rebid one no trump despite the singleton in partner's suit.

Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - This hand is easier to bid if you don't play transfer bids, since you can bid two diamonds to show a weak hand with a five-card or

longer suit. Transfer bidders must play at the three-level or pass one no trump. Don't even think of checking on a major fit. Partner will almost surely bid spades, and what then? Pass.

Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

A. 183 98742 QAK5 4Q8

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Here transfer bids work beautifully — you can transfer to hearts by bidding two diamonds and then jump to three no trump, showing a balanced hand with five hearts. If that weapon is not in your arsenal, simply jump to three no trump. Your hearts are too weak for a jump to three hearts, which partner will automatically raise to game on almost any three-card holding.

Q. 5 - As South vulnerable, you hold:

A. 5 77 OK9 4AKQJ7652

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - This hand is easier to bid if

you don't play transfer bids, since you can bid two diamonds to show a weak hand with a five-card or

longer suit. Transfer bidders must play at the three-level or pass one no trump. Don't even think of checking on a major fit. Partner will almost surely bid spades, and what then? Pass.

Q. 7 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 8 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 9 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 10 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 11 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 12 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 13 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 14 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 15 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 16 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 17 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 18 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 19 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 20 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 21 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 22 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 23 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 24 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

A. 1084 CQ8762 4K52

Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?

A - Your first reaction might be to bid one diamond, but your hand is worth only one bid and you won't be happy if partner rebids in a major or, worse, one no trump. Respond two clubs immediately and spare yourself worry of what twists the auction could take.

Q. 25 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

Arafat to ask Clinton to recognise Palestinian right to statehood

RAMALLAH (AFP) — President Yasser Arafat will ask U.S. President Bill Clinton when they meet this month to formally recognise for the first time the Palestinians' right to statehood, a senior aide said Wednesday.

Such U.S. recognition could be part of a broader international deal under which the Palestinians would agree to postpone a unilateral declaration of independence beyond May 4, when interim peace accords with Israel expire, said Tayeb Abdul Rahim, one of Arafat's closest advisors.

"Arafat will ask Clinton at their summit on March 23 for American recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination, which will clearly mean the establishment of a Palestinian state," Abdul Rahim told AFP.

Palestinian officials said the Arafat-Clinton meeting at the White House would focus on Palestinian conditions for delaying the independence declaration, which Israel has warned would lead to a major crisis and potential violence.

Europe, the U.S., Jordan and Egypt have all urged Arafat to delay the statehood declaration, arguing in part that the move would likely boost the position of Israeli hardliners in national elections to be held on May 17.

Abdul Rahim stressed that no final decision had been taken by Palestinian leaders

on the issue.

And he said that even if the declaration is put off, the world community must recognise that the status of the Palestinian territories will have changed with the expiration of the five-year interim autonomy period set down in the Oslo peace accords.

"We want to continue consulting with our friends before we will declare our position" on the timing of a statehood declaration, he said.

"But whatever the decision is, the political status of the Palestinian territories after the 4th of May will never be the same," he said.

Palestinians assert that the change of status is legally

necessary since once the Oslo interim accords expire, all institutions of the PNA autonomy government created under those agreements will technically lose their legitimacy.

Another senior Palestinian official said European governments had already agreed to boost their ties to the PNA after May 4 in exchange for a postponement of the independence declaration.

"The Europeans are going to raise the level of Palestinian representative offices as part of a clearer recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination," said Nabil Shaath, the Palestinian minister for international cooperation.

Kurdish rebels move to replace Ocalan as leader — report

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's Kurdish rebels have taken steps towards choosing a new leader to replace jailed chief Abdullah Ocalan, a Turkish newspaper said on Wednesday.

Miliyett said a meeting of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) had appointed a senior commander, Cemil Bayik, as the guerrillas' "high authority."

Ocalan, who founded the Kurdish rebel movement and led its armed campaign for 14 years, was seized in Kenya last month and

flown to Turkey for trial on treason charges.

If convicted, he faces either execution or the rest of his life in jail. Kurdish sources said any new title for Bayik did not mean he was a direct replacement for Ocalan but was recognition that he now had a greater role in the rebels' fight for Kurdish self-rule in southeastern Turkey.

Bayik, in his late forties, was a fellow founder of the PKK in 1978 and is alleged to have planned an attack on the army in 1984

regarded as marking the start of the armed campaign.

He is believed to have been fighting in the mountains of Turkey and Kurdish northern Iraq since then, unlike Ocalan who lived in a series of villages in Damascus for 18 years until late 1998 when Syria threw him out under pressure from Turkey.

Miliyett said Bayik's promotion had dealt a blow to the leadership hopes of Ocalan's brother Osman. Another senior PKK



RACING DUCKS: A Thames Water worker Wednesday prepares over 100 plastic ducks on Westminster Bridge in London as part of a charity race on the River Thames for Members of Parliament. The race, by Thames Water, highlights the environment and the Thames Water investment programme (AFP photo)

Turkey warns Greece over PKK support

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey has warned neighbouring Greece of a further worsening of ties if Athens continues to support the rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) fighting the Ankara government, the liberal daily Milliyet reported Wednesday.

"We have to see that Greece cuts off its ties with the PKK," Turkish Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Korkmaz Hakanir told the daily. "Otherwise, worse things will happen between the two countries."

Turkey's already sour ties with Greece took a new downwards turn when Athens admitted that it had sheltered PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in its ambassador's residence in Kenya for 12 days before the rebel leader was snatched and hauled back to Turkey last month.

"Greece follows a hostile policy towards Turkey. If it does not change its attitude, worse developments will take place in eastern Mediterranean. We are coming to the end of our patience," Hakanir said.

In Athens, Greek government spokesman Dimitris Reppas accused Turkish officials of stirring up trouble between the two countries through their "aggressive and provocative" remarks.

He urged Turkey to "drop its anti-Greek attitude and look at issues more calmly."

Turkey and Greece remain at odds over a series of problems in the Aegean as well as over the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, which remains divided between the two.

Last week, the Turkish foreign ministry announced that the Greek and Cypriot attitude in the Ocalan case would not facilitate a settlement in Cyprus.

U.S. envoy Thomas Miller is scheduled to travel shortly to Cyprus, Turkey and Greece to try to ease tensions, a U.S. source in Ankara said.

"We have a communication problem with Greece. Our dialogue channels are more open even with Syria. We have not had dialogue with Greece for 20 years," Hakanir told Milliyet.

In October last year, Syria pledged to close down all PKK camps on its soil and turn out Ocalan from his long-term base in the country after Turkey threatened military action against its southern neighbour.

"How can a NATO-member country work against another NATO-member country? Greece has violated all rules of law," Hakanir added.

A week ago, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel charged that Athens was an "accomplice" of the PKK and warned that Ankara would use its "right to self-defence" if Greece continues to support the rebels.

Last prisoners in

settled Bosphorus
our declared
settlement

Osce talks to
resume in Paris

One killed in Italian
university shooting

Florida undertaker
cut hand from
corpse for voodoo

Fire in Danish silo
in fourth month

NEWS IN BRIEF

One Turkish soldier killed in PKK attack

ANKARA (AFP) — A Turkish soldier was killed and five others were wounded in a rebel attack on an army patrol in Turkey's troubled southeast late Tuesday, the Anatolia news agency reported Wednesday. The patrol was ambushed on the highway linking the regional capital Diyarbakir with Mardin near the Syrian border. Anatolia said the attack was committed by "terrorists," the official Turkish term for fighters of the rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

British 'grannies' told to tackle crime

LONDON (AFP) — British Home Secretary Jack Straw on Wednesday called on the nation's grandmothers to join the fight against crime, saying they were the right people to collar young hooligans. "Some of the most effective people at tackling these youngsters are grandmothers because they know how to deal with these lads. On the whole, you don't hit your mother, you don't hit women. It's quite interesting, the psychology of this," he said in an interview released on the BBC Internet site. Straw, who has cultivated an image as a "crime-buster," recently came in for a storm of criticism after telling Britons to intervene when they witness a crime in the street. He even tried to show the way by telling how he had ticked off an adolescent he had caught spitting on passers-by from a bridge above. The minister was accused of inciting people to take unnecessary risks.

Nineteen drown in Egypt bus crash

CAIRO (R) — Nineteen people drowned and 28 were slightly injured when a bus plunged into a canal after colliding with a tractor in southern Egypt Wednesday, security sources said. They said the accident happened while the bus was travelling south from Assiut, 400 km south of Cairo. The source said the bus driver, who was among the injured, had lost control of the vehicle after trying in vain to avoid the tractor. Earlier reports had identified the other vehicle involved as a truck.

U.S., Kuwaiti forces to hold exercise

KUWAIT (AP) — U.S. navy sailors and marines from the Fifth Fleet will start a one-month training exercise with Kuwaiti forces on Thursday. A U.S. embassy statement said Wednesday that the war games, code-named Eager Mace 99, will include amphibious, ground, air and naval training. The embassy did not say how many soldiers would take part in the manoeuvres. Eager Mace is the latest of routine exercises between the two militaries, part of a 10-year defence agreement Kuwait signed with Washington shortly after the 1991 Gulf War that liberated this small oil-rich state from a seven-month Iraqi occupation.

Iran to try police on torture charges

TEHRAN (R) — An Iranian police chief and 10 of his men are to stand trial on charges of torturing Tehran city officials arrested last year on corruption charges. Iran's news agency IRNA reported on Wednesday, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Nodai, chief of police intelligence, and 10 members of his staff will be tried at a military court in May. IRNA quoted judiciary spokesman Fotovat Nassiri-Savadkui as saying. The court will hear charges of mistreatment filed against the suspects by a number of officials who were detained in connection with a corruption scandal in the Tehran city government, Nassiri-Savadkui said.

Egyptian gives birth to quintuplets

CAIRO (AFP) — A 27-year-old Egyptian woman who took fertility drugs gave birth to quintuplets on her first delivery, hospital officials said Wednesday. The three boys and two girls were placed in an incubator with difficulty breathing but are otherwise healthy, a spokesman for Maadi Military Hospital in southern Cairo said. The babies were delivered by caesarean section on Monday, two months before their due date, and weighed between 800 g and 1.2 kg, hospital officials said.

Iraq urges Security Council to halt U.S. bombings

Russia, France to raise pipeline issue at U.N.

Agencies

IRAQ URGED THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL on Wednesday to stop the U.S. air raids which have sliced the sanctions-hit state's oil exports in half, as Moscow and Paris condemned the deadly bombings.

"We call on the Security Council to intervene to stop the continuation of these aggressions and to condemn them," the official Al Jumhuriya newspaper said, accusing the U.S. of plotting to stop Iraqi oil exports.

"At the same time, we stress that Iraq is determined to continue to oppose the U.S. and British planes," the newspaper said.

The defiance came as President Saddam Hussein late on Tuesday presided over a meeting of top officials to review Iraq's air defences.

Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz later reiterated that Baghdad was determined to resist U.S. and British over-flights of the no-fly zones in the north and south "by all means."

Meanwhile, Russia and France are to protest U.S. air

strikes in Iraq that damaged oil pipeline facilities, prompting a halt in U.N.-supervised Iraqi exports. Western diplomats said the diplomats said that the two countries would request a briefing from the U.N. official in charge of implementing a humanitarian programme on the impact of the strikes, during a closed-door U.N. Security Council session on Wednesday.

The spokesman for the oil-for-food programme, John Mills, told AFP that Benon Sevan would "give the council an update on latest information" from the sites in northern Iraq located inside a U.S. and British patrolled "no-fly" zone.

In London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said the air strikes which cut Iraq's oil pipeline to Turkey were carried out by mistake.

"It certainly was not by purpose, and we don't even know yet what the extent of the damage clearly is," Blair told the House of Commons.

Blair reminded MPs of U.S. and British reasons for the strikes. "In Iraq it is necessary to protect both the Kurdish people and the Shia Muslims

from the brutality of [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein," said the prime minister. "If he wants to stop those patrols then he can cut back in line with the U.N. resolutions, stop butchering those people for whom he has responsibility and start behaving like a responsible leader in the world."

But Blair's contention that the pipeline strikes were by mistake appeared to contradict statements in Washington. There, Pentagon officials said Iraqi facilities with dual military and civilian uses were now subject to attack if they posed a threat to U.S. and British pilots.

"If Saddam Hussein chooses to link his commercial enterprises with his military enterprises, that's his problem," said one Pentagon official. The relay station "may have had a dual use function. In fact, looking at it, it probably did," the official said.

U.S. jets on Sunday and Monday carried out a series of bombing raids which hit communication centres along the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline that transports more than half of all Iraq's U.N.-authorised crude exports.

Sevan warned that "any extended stoppage will aggravate further the lack of funding available for humanitarian supplies under the oil for food programme."

The U.N. spokesman in Baghdad, George Somervill, on Wednesday told AFP the oil exports were still halted, costing Baghdad some \$10 million a day, based on a price of \$38 a barrel.

The strikes were the heaviest since the Desert Fox assault launched by Washington and London in mid-December. The U.S. military said, Baghdad said at least four people were killed in northern Iraq on Sunday and Monday.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen acknowledged that the raids could have been to blame for the halt of oil exports but insisted that an Iraqi communications facility was targeted on Sunday.

U.S. pilots have now been given "greater flexibility to attack those systems which put them in jeopardy," he announced.

The oil-for-food programme coordinator, Sevan, said he was "deeply concerned" by the developments.

Sevan warned that "any extended stoppage will aggravate further the lack of funding available for humanitarian supplies under the oil for food programme."

British MP urges action to monitor killer asteroids

LONDON (R) — A British member of parliament on Wednesday launched a campaign for the global monitoring of massive asteroids which could kill billions of people if they crashed into the earth.

"At present an asteroid could hit the earth and we would have about 20 seconds' notice," Lembit Opik told a news conference. "It isn't long enough to say the Lord's Prayer."

An Israeli government which made peace with the Palestinians lost reelection in 1996 after a spate of deadly suicide bombings claimed by Hamas. Benjamin Netanyahu, a hardliner who promised "peace with security," was elected in its place.

Yassin said Hamas had no interest in the outcome of the Israeli election calling the left and the right the same.

Scientists believe six such dedicated telescopes are needed around the globe to identify and track the 2,000 or so "near-earth" asteroids, minor planets measuring more than a kilometre across.

They say this could enable them to predict a collision with the earth some 30-30 years before it occurred, giving enough time for humanity to launch a nuclear bomb or another device into space to intercept the asteroid and deflect its course.

Astronomer Mark Bailey, director of Northern Ireland's Armagh observatory, said a large asteroid hitting the earth would cause disaster on a scale comparable with the one which scientists believe wiped out dinosaurs 60 million years ago.

"It doesn't matter where on earth it hits. The dust thrown into the atmosphere would cool the earth drastically and cause a temporary shutdown of agriculture," he said. "It could mean the loss of about a quarter of the world's population."

He said scientists had only discovered the existence of large near-earth asteroids — those which orbit relatively close to the earth instead of in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter — in the last few years.

A globally-threatening impact with one is likely to occur only once in 100,000 years. But the risk of any given citizen of the U.S. dying because of an asteroid impact has been estimated at 20,000 to 1, Bailey said.

Jonathan Tate, director of the pressure group Space Guard U.K., said setting up the proposed telescope, thus encouraging other developed countries to take similar steps, would cost just 9.45 million pounds (\$15.29 million) over 10 years.

"It is only sense to do something about this. If the Americans could get to the moon in 10 years, we can solve this problem in less than 10 years."